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Number 71

May 1990

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The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



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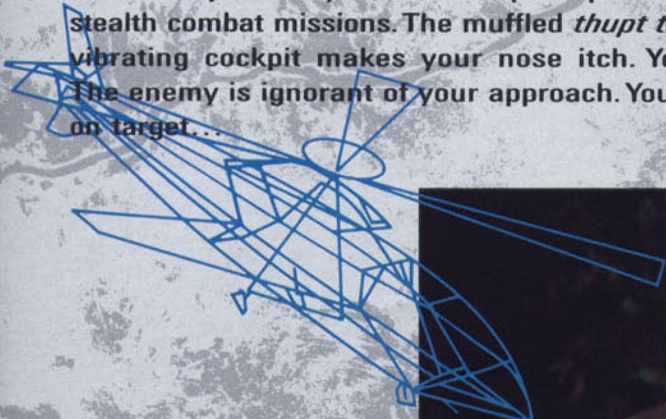
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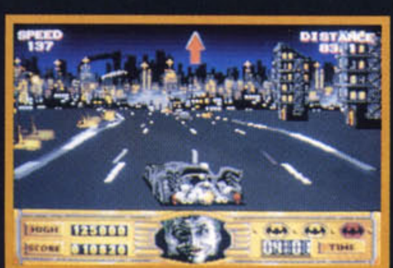
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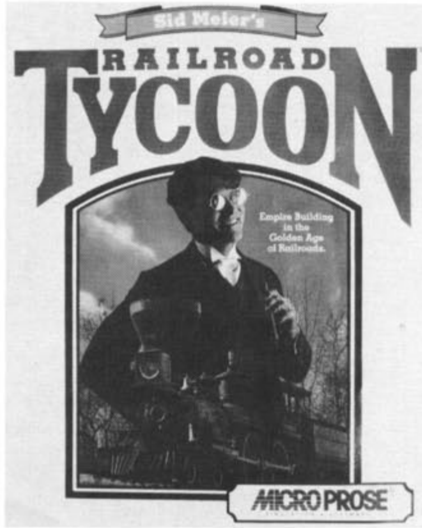
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games For Nine Years

May 1990 **Number 71**



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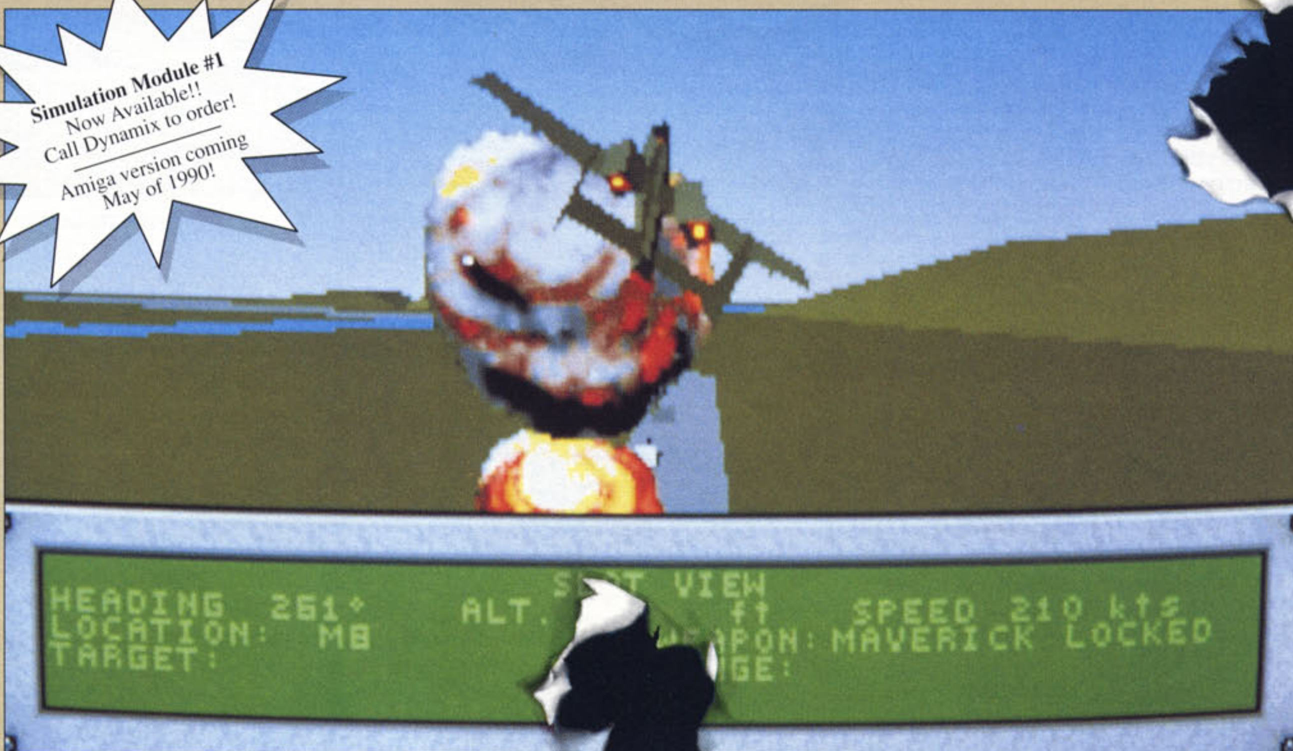
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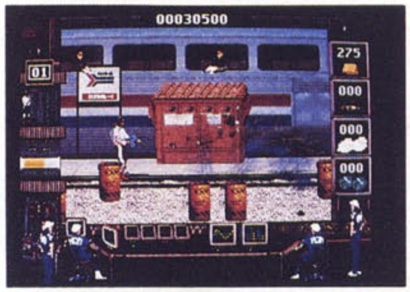
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CRIME WAVE: This game may not be for everybody, but with the plethora of gratuitous violence and titillating animated scenes of the President's kidnapped daughter (A VERY sexy young lady!), you can bet it tries to be. Non-stop killing, maiming, bloodletting, and flying, burning body parts dash across the screen (only broken up by the animation sequences between the President's voluptuous daughter and her vile kidnappers). Don't kid yourself, though, the graphics of the girl are completely state of the art! IBM ($59.95) Circle Reader Service #1.

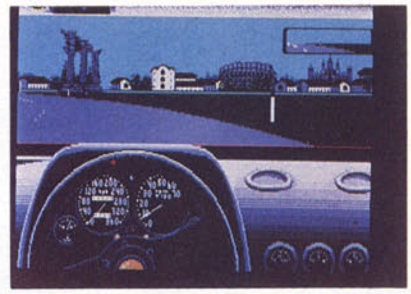
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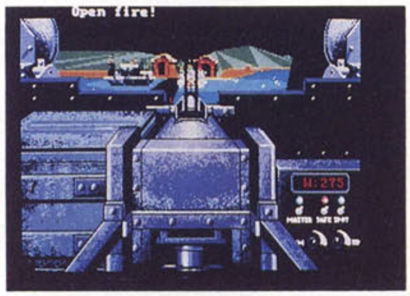
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HEAT WAVE: If power speedboat racing is your thing, you might warm up to Heat Wave. With four muscle boats to choose from, you decide how much gas and how many spare parts you'll need to carry you through the race before it even begins. Several courses are provided for variety, but you'd better be pretty handy cutting through the chop, or Heat Wave will leave you all wet. C-64/128 ($29.95), IBM/Tandy ($39.95). Circle #4.

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Continued on page 54


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The Play Is The Thing

Recently, when members of the Software Publishers Association were being asked to vote on the best software products of 1989, *CGW* received a fascinating protest letter in which the author urged the SPA members not to vote for any product which allegedly glorified war. Later, when the editorial staff attended the Computer Game Developers' Conference in San Jose, one speaker eloquently prophesied against the destructive machismo of nationalism which allegedly undergirds both simulations of military vehicles and traditional wargames. Judging from other comments and BBS messages which have come to this editor's attention, this anti-wargame perspective seems to be growing.

Although almost anyone who has observed the evolution of computer games over the last decade could have seen this neo-fundamentalism coming, it is still disconcerting to see continuing confusion with regard to what play or, perhaps, art actually is. Within the rapidly shifting context of our current social environment, it seems to be inevitable for both those who are politically on the left and those who are on the right to jump to hasty generalizations regarding the causes and effects of society's ills.

Is there an increase in teen-aged suicide? The radical right would have us to believe that the simple cause may be found in less-than-wholesome rock lyrics and fantasy role-playing games. Is there an increase in violent crimes? Some would have us believe that violence on television and in films is the culprit. Does pornography *cause* sexual crime or do those who are already sick enough to be drawn to those crimes simply add pornographic material to their already perverse repertoire? Now, it appears that the same leftist mentality that believes banning war toys will stave off our violent society may be targeting computer wargames, as well.

This belief is, in fact, a hasty and unreasoned generalization. There are many wargamers and wargame designers (both on the boardgame side and the computer game side) who are, quite simply, pacifists. In the early 1980s, a Southern California television station covered a local gaming convention and showed about two minutes of resplendently painted Napoleonic miniatures on the screen. "Doesn't this glorify war?" asked the reporter.

"Not really," answered the gamer, "it really makes you wonder about the generals who actually send young men out to die."

Since the reporter had already made up his mind about the way the story was to be handled, he segued into some footage about some actual military exercises being held in the desert. He didn't hear what the gamer said. He did not even consider the possibility that wargaming may have the same effect upon gamers that viewing the Vietnam war on television had upon the majority of United States television viewers in the late '60s and early '70s.

Many of those who criticize the computer wargame genre have not heard what the developers have said, either. They haven't heard how wargame designers want to give wargamers enough data to help them understand the high cost of war, not simply in terms of machines and budgets, but in terms of its highest cost—human potential. Indeed, they may even have a fundamental misconception about the nature of play.

What *is* the nature of play? In speaking of a child's play, Erik Erikson suggested that play is " . . . the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning . . ." (*Childhood and Society*, p. 195).

Play creates, then, a model or "controlled" situation where the player can observe the results of his/her experiments and plans in order to test out the potential results of those strategies with no risk to the player him/herself. In play, one can rattle sabres with a foreign power, knowing all the while that should nuclear war ensue, it will only occur on the screen. Nevertheless, one will probably not be as quick to advocate sabre rattling as a matter of public policy when reality is on the line if the simulation/game is sufficiently convincing about the uncertainty/danger of that activity. In play, one can calmly send that cavalry unit on that hopeless mission of taking that bloody hill. Yet, perhaps, as one looks at the body count flashing in a numerical report or watches the unit rout across the computer screen, one will think about the tragedy and the waste of warfare.

Why, then, do pacifists play wargames? It is not only because it is entertaining to solve the conundrum of the situation, but because it is fun to *play* with the "what if"s attendant to both hypothetical and historical battles. In addition, wargames offer an educational value, as well. In wargames, one learns from the mistakes of the past, begins to understand why a battle went a certain way, and tries to comprehend both why the battle was fought and what each army hoped to gain. Pacifists play wargames to learn the lessons of history and to solve the conundrum of the situation. Many who invest hours in such "play" would never want the actual task. The model, the controlled situation, allows wargamers to experiment *without* actually having to commit lives and less precious resources to the task. This is a vital part of play.

The key to the understanding of play is to be able to try a myriad of solutions to a given problem without risk. This is one reason why "saved game" positions are very important. Part of the "control" in a given situation is the ability to get discernable feedback from a given action. "Why did the witch doctor cook me in the pot when I tried to give him money?" It may not be a situation we would ever face in "reality", but it may teach us something about diversity of cultures (an important lesson in terms of the global community) or interpersonal understanding. If one is not given the chance to go back and try a different approach under the same exact parameters, however, the lesson may go unlearned.

Now, computer game developers find themselves caught between two similar opinions. From the right wing, they are told that fantasy role-playing games are evil because they dabble in magic and myth and from the left wing, they are told that military simulations are evil because they glorify war and promote nationalism. In reality, both sides underestimate the value of play. The role-player who learns to manage his inventory of skills/spells/artifacts/strength in a fantasy game, just might learn to manage his time/possessions/health/goals better as a result. The wargamer who learns to manage his men/units/vehicles/supplies just might become a better manager, in general.

When Will Wright, designer of *SimCity*, was asked what he most wanted people to learn from his product, he answered, "I just hope that they'll think about their own cities differently. Maybe, they'll take more interest in the whole process." Will understood the nature of play. As the metaphors of a game take hold, they change the player's way of viewing the situations and events outside him/herself. If the game is successful, the metaphors change the player itself. Finally, if the game is successful, it is not the *content* of the game which changes the player, but the playing of the game itself.


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OVER THERE

Of Bards, Shards and Blackguards:

The Latest Games From Europe

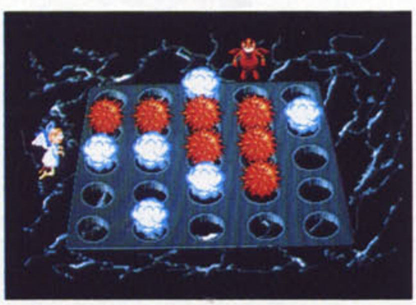
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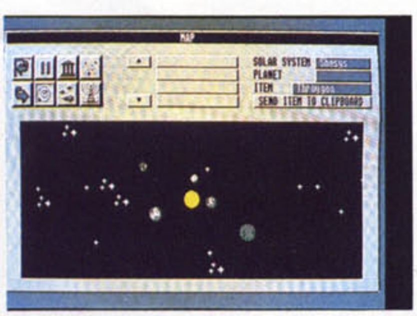












"Marry, 'tis a strange churl, that standeth over there. Methinks it knoweth not the time of day."

Well, is it any wonder? There you were strolling along, with the hundreds of other tourists along the banks of the River Avon, perusing the souvenir shops of Stratford-Upon-Avon (Shakespeare's birthplace) and noting the rather strange characters you often come across. The three old ladies in that antique shop, for instance. They weren't very pleased when you wouldn't buy their cauldron, were they? Maybe they had something to do with the predicament in which you currently find yourself.

Utilizing a variety of Shakespearean plays and language, *Avon* is a humorous text-only adventure for the PC from UK adventure veterans **Topologika**. The player has to escape from the Shakespearean world in which he is trapped. Don't worry though, one doesn't need to have any knowledge of Shakespeare to play or enjoy this adventure. *Avon* is awash with atmospheric descriptions and comes complete with a free adventure called *Monsters of Murdac*. Both games have an on-line help feature, if needed. Available now, for £19.99 (Visa accepted), *Avon/Monsters of Murdac* (as well as a wide range of other text adventures for the PC) is available from Topologika, PO Box 39, Stilton, Peterborough, England, PE7 3RL.

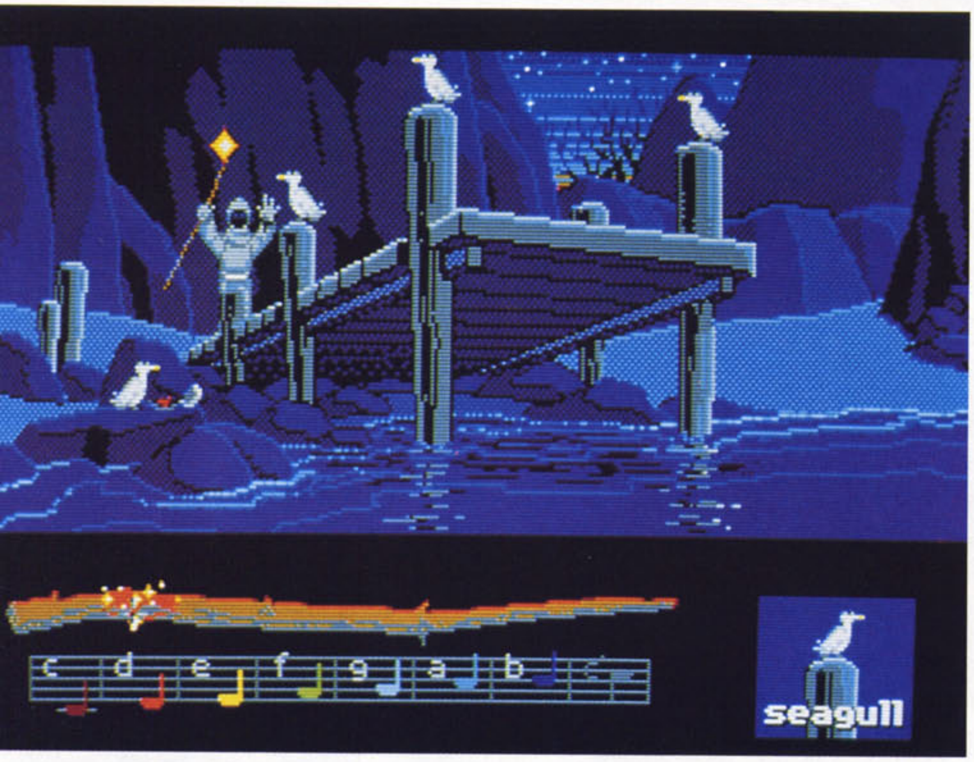
Coded by a group of UK programmers, *Imperium* is **Electronic Arts** new "complex" strategy game set in space. One becomes the Emperor of Earth and its allied planets. The player's objective? Stay in power for the next 1,000 years or be the sole surviving Emperor of the Galaxy. A variety of diplomatic, economic and military decisions will have to be made (although the computer can be instructed to take some of the workload off your shoulders). To expand one's Empire, a player can build fleets and invade neighboring planets (from which various reports are received). The discovery of Nostrum, a life-preserving drug, is an essential chore. To aid in this quest are a variety of subordinates, each with varying levels of competence. One must survive frequent elections, though, to succeed and a popularity chart will act as a good indication as to the player's success in the political arena. Available on the Amiga and ST in April for £24.99.

From the French software house, **Art of Dreams**, comes *Antago*—a rather abstract puzzle game. For one or two players, *Antago* has them taking the role of either an angel or a devil. The aim of the game is pretty simple, one must make a row of five symbols. Does that sound simple? You can bet your life it isn't! Including a wealth of comical animation and music, *Antago* is currently available on the PC, ST and Amiga for £19.99.

Another French game, this time from **New Deal Promotions**, leads you around a 50 location adventure known as *Astate*. The player is an archaeologist who must find the five pieces of the Statue of Theomorphe, from the legend of the same name. Starting with nothing more than a metal detector, drill and pickaxe, one must search for the pieces. Finding one piece will give clues as to the locations of the rest. Available now on the ST with an imminent release on the Amiga, *Astate* retails at £19.99.

Available now on PC, ST and Amiga formats is *Demon's Tomb*, a text/graphic adventure from **Virgin/Melbourne House**. Set in deepest rural England the adventure begins on a one-man archaeological excavation in a remote English forest. Little does the archaeologist know that he is doomed to die a violent death. Yet, the player must take part in his fate, controlling the good Professor in an effort to secure certain objects for the use of anyone who is likely to follow. This sort of "foreword" has been used in *Zork Zero*, for example. Once the Professor is dead,

Continued on page 58



The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

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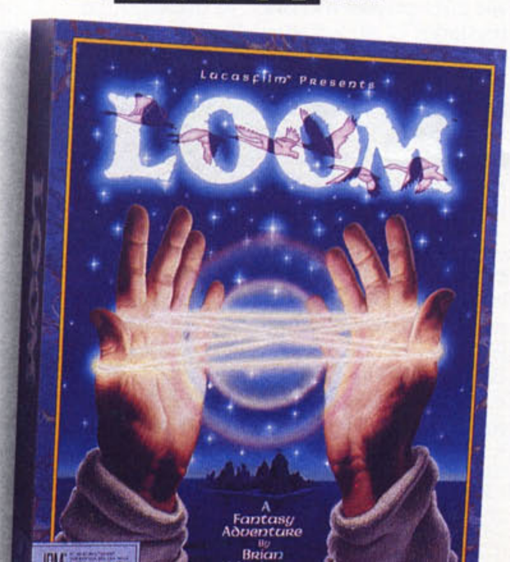
Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

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The Rumor Bag

by Youssef Bismillah Bingara



It was one of those classic Moroccan restaurants, the kind with the ace of spades doorways and the brass tabletops that look like an Aztec calendar. The Near Eastern influence was almost as prevalent as the Moorish castles and mosques which are being drawn by Rob Stein for Ivan and Carol Manley's upcoming *Excalibur II*, **Virgin Mastertronic**'s sequel to their soon-to-be-released game of Arthurian legend—*Excalibur*.

No sooner did we begin dining than the lights dimmed and a drum roll sounded over the loudspeaker system. "And now," boomed a voice like a foreign Ed McMahon, "to enhance your dining pleasure, the Miss America of belly dancing, the lovely Una." As we watched her performance and became as entranced as a King Cobra weaving in time to a snake charmer, she tauntingly placed her veil around the paper bag I normally wear over my head. Embroidered upon the veil were enough Arabic characters to let us know that *Hero's Quest 2: Trial By Fire* will offer players a chance to undergo the mysteries of an initiation ritual, solve numerous puzzles and unravel a number of interwoven tales (complete with Nishiuye and Moore animation of strange characters and sexy females, a Mark Seibert soundtrack, and plenty of the outrageous Cole humor) which abound in the land of Shapeir.

Una also motioned for me to stand up, offer a semblance of a belly dance (I had more to shake than she did, but it wasn't nearly as graceful) and move across the floor. There, I was confronted by Bob Bates, designer of *Sherlock: Riddle of the Crown Jewels* and *Arthur* for **Infocom**. Flanked by two massive warriors with proportionately huge scimitars, Bates informed me that he did *indeed* have two games coming out (as reported in *CGW #70*) and that Steve Meretzky of *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* fame was indeed authoring one of those games. He even informed me that just as **Sierra** has three games (either recently released or in production) that have belly dancing scenes, his latest game also has a belly dancer. However, he informed me in no uncertain terms that the development language produced for his games is *not* based on *ZIL*, the Zork interpreter.

I looked at Bob's bodyguards again and realized that I was really glad he hadn't been playing the upcoming revision of *CEO* on the **PRODIGY Interactive Service Network**. The new version is supposed to offer murders and hostile takeovers among other options and I sure didn't want to deal with anyone experienced in either wicked practice. I promised not to ever say anything about *ZIL* again if he'd call off the mean looking thugs at his side. Those guys looked like they could single-handedly win the far future war depicted in **Data East**'s upcoming *Full Metal Planet*. Originally released in France by **Infogrames**, the game combines exploration, economic management and warfare; offers very attractive graphics; and is based on a French boardgame with the same name.

As they escorted me back to our table, I felt like I was in the Strait of Gibraltar. This "fleeting" thought reminded me that **Simulations Canada**'s *Fleet Med* would be the last game to use their *Long Lance* system of tactical naval games. Fortunately, wargamers would still see: a strategic naval game set in the Pacific to be called either *Divine Wind* or *Pacific Storm*, *Main Battle Tank: Northern Germany*, and a World War III game of grand strategic naval combat from **SimCan**.

Meanwhile, back at our table, an amazing Sidney Greenstreet look-alike had joined our party. He leaned over and whispered confidentially in my ear that he knew how to get a "Flying Kirov" in **Three-Sixty**'s *Harpoon*. He said that in the early versions of the game, you could select a Kirov class carrier, put it in your mix of ships and give it the last order before saving the game. Then, when you restart the game, there is a 50% chance that it will become an "airplane". Talk about a versatile platform!

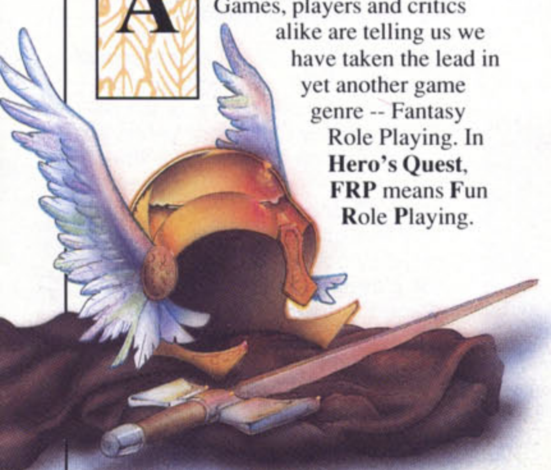
We washed our hands and the waiter lined up some tall glasses in a row. He brought in a steaming pot that looked like something the caterpillar in *Alice In Wonderland* would have smoked. Pouring the tea from shoulder height, the hot liquid flowed out of the pot like a streaming waterfall and filled all of our glasses. He didn't spill a drop. I asked the Greenstreet character if this was like "high tea". Instead of answering my irreverent interrogative, he told me that **Virgin Mastertronic** will publish a game called *Wonderland* this summer. Designed by the veteran adventure game group, **Magnetic Scrolls**, the story will be "darker" in atmosphere than the Disney version of the story in an attempt to get closer to the original. In fact, I almost expected the mutant creatures from **Trans Fiction**'s *Mammal Club*, the adventure game set in far-future New York, to show up at our table. I could just see some rabbit/human creature shooing us away from the table saying, "No room! No room!" In fact, I was planning to write more in this column, but my editor just said the same thing. **CGW**

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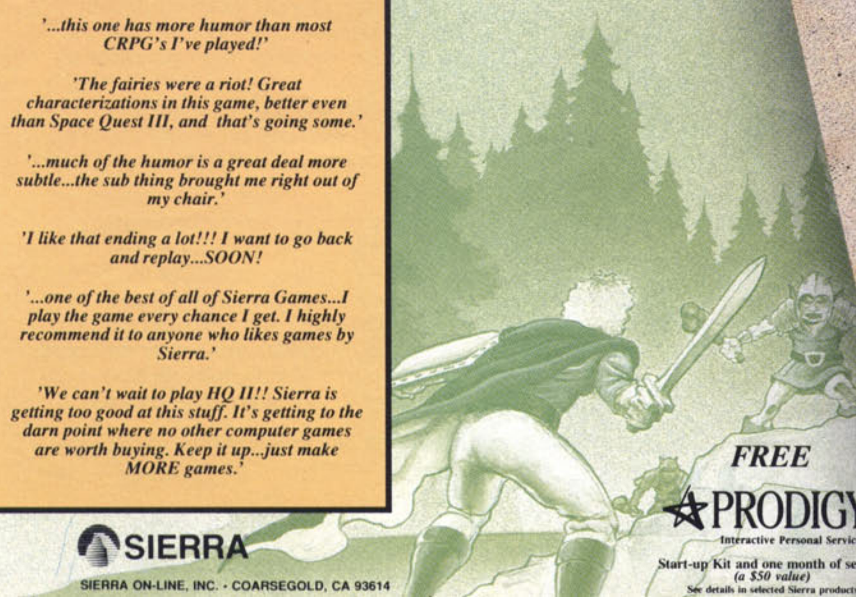
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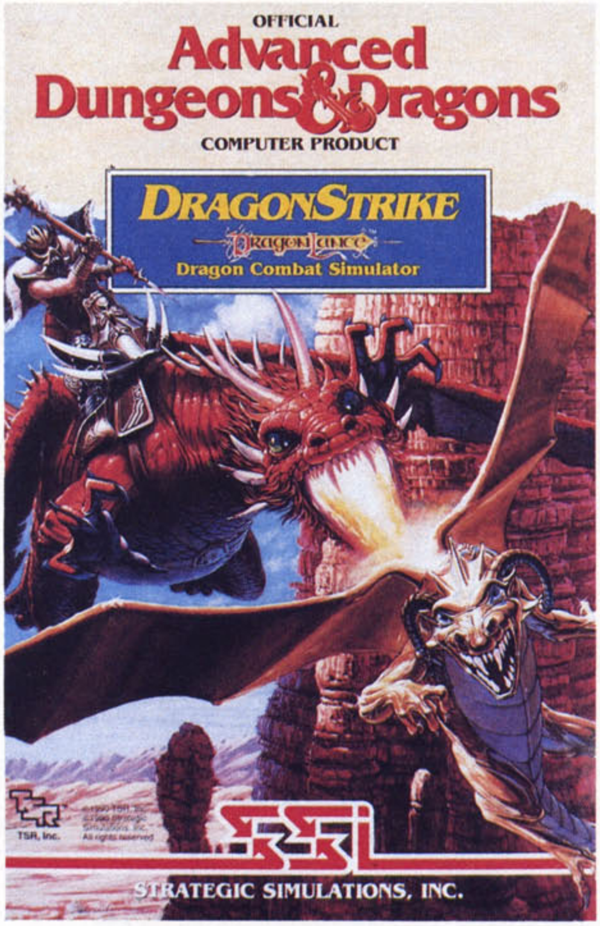
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Here Be Dragons

SSI's "DragonStrike"

by Johnny L. Wilson

They are terrifying, gargantuan creatures. They are archetypes, shadow images of the primal serpent in the garden of innocence which are enlarged to monstrous proportions by our subconscious. The chivalrous knights of legend opposed them and the fantastic races of Middle Earth feared them. They have symbolized ravenous greed and senseless destruction to the point at which they have become the ultimate villains in the worlds of fantasy.



Yet, there are positive aspects to the dragons of legend. As fierce as the villainous worm of *Dragonslayer* was, its scales could be utilized as armor and the society perceived its power as a divinely ordained force for "right". Anne MacCaffery's dragons are not only the primary instruments of protection against the threat of destruction by alien infestation (called "thread" in the books) by burning the alien menace with their fiery breath, but they hold a telepathic and telempathic bond with their masters, the dragonriders of Pern. Even Robert Don Hughes' schizophrenic villain, the two-headed Vicia-Heinox in *The Prophet of Lamath* (**Del-Rey Books**), served an important purpose in providing stability between three quite distinctive cultures.

In *DragonStrike*, **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**'s first VGA product on the IBM (also to be released on the Amiga), these prodigious winged reptiles are some of the most important assets for the "Champions of Krynn" in attempting to defeat the dark forces of Queen Takhesis. All action takes place in the *DragonLance* world during the era known as the *War of the Lance*. There is one important difference, however. *DragonStrike* is neither a pure role-playing game nor an action/adventure game. Instead, it is a "flight" simulator set in a fictitious universe with a role-playing shell to bind the story/campaign together. The player takes on the role of a dragonrider during the *War of the Lance* and flies his dragon(s) through more than thirteen different combat scenarios of three-dimensional, polygon-filled scrolling graphics (some scenarios are different, depending on whether the player takes a diverging track or not). Though the game is a flight simulator, its style and flow of play is most similar to **Activision**'s *MechWarrior*. Like *MechWarrior*, *DragonStrike* offers an exciting challenge whether one is interested in simply booting a scenario here and there or actually playing out a full campaign. If anything, the role-playing wrap for *DragonStrike* is even more effective than that in *MechWarrior* because there are three different tracks for characters to play through in order to win, rather than one basic storyline to complete as in the earlier game.

View From The Heights

DragonStrike works on several different levels. As a role-playing experience, it solves some of the difficulties many DungeonMasters have had in dealing with dragons in their scenarios/campaigns. The present writer tried to avoid using dragons very often because they were hard to play-balance in a campaign unless the player characters' party had a dragon in their arsenal, as well. Since dragons had an awesome destructive power, tremendous range, and, as a rule, magical attacks as well, they were often more trouble to referee than they were worth. This writer confesses to occasionally placing a formidable dragon to guard a special treasure or confronting the party with a Vicia-Heinox style dragon to provide comedy relief and a modicum of a challenge, but *never* allowed a player character in one of his campaigns to fly a dragon. That would have been too unwieldy to referee.

Characters not only fly several different types of dragons in *DragonStrike*, however, but they face a variety of dragons as opponents, as well. Though the program has elected to eliminate the percentage chance for magical attacks, it successfully enables players to use long-range weapons (breath weapons consistent with the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual*) and short-range weapons (a dragonlance affixed to the saddle and aimed by the player). In addition, it automatically handles the claw and bite attacks which are often so time-consuming to resolve during pen and paper gaming sessions. So, even the combat works better than the pen and paper game's.

DragonStrike also successfully conveys the sense of being there. The point-of-view perspectives that allow the player to view the tail and wing views, the VGA graphics (as well as the EGA) that almost make the dragons seem alive, the variety of terrain (consistent with the map of Krynn itself), the welcome ability to control the dragon with a choice of joystick, mouse or keyboard, and the relatively smooth frame rate (it isn't quite as smooth as *MechWarrior*'s) all work together to kindle an illusion of reality.

With all of this going for it, one can imagine how much

Continued on page 16

DragonStrike

Continued from page 14

adrenaline can be produced in each combat. This writer noted his heart pounding and his hands shaking as two white dragons took shape on the screen and headed in his direction. With finger poised over the breath weapon key, he anxiously awaited that point in time in which he could blast the white dragon with a cone of cold. That's entertainment!

Add to this the fact that the scenarios are nicely balanced in terms of: number and types of enemy dragons, mission objectives, terrain, and story. Then, you know that this is an extremely versatile and potentially popular product.

Finally, the design/programming team of *DragonStrike* should be commended for allowing the user to toggle the level of realism in order to opt for performance rather than graphics. Although the realistic graphics are superb, they do have a tendency to bog down the action on slower machines. Therefore, the game allows players to toggle between polygon-filled graphics with their maximum aesthetic effect and functional, fast-drawing wireframe graphics that do not look as nice, but draw considerably faster on the screen. Therefore, the player can decide what is most important in terms of game play. In graphics, play and user-friendliness, **Westwood Associates** has taken a great leap beyond the company's previous efforts in *Hillsfar* and **Infocom**'s *Battletech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*.

Down in the Valley

The fiction is solid, reflecting the product's close ties with **TSR**, publishers of the pen and paper games, novels and comic books. Yet, here is where some may be disappointed. Whereas *MechWarrior* gave the player's character some freedom to explore the storyline outside of his 'mech, *DragonStrike* (at least, in this first release) keeps the player's character firmly attached to the saddle (except when he is dislodged in combat and tumbles toward the ground).







Second, the interface is not altogether convincing. Although it creates the verisimilitude of flying a dragon better than this writer ever thought possible, its very success makes one long for a little more. The crystal ball and arrow of enemy detection given to the player's character by the wizard, Fizban, are extremely helpful and fit well into the *DragonLance* universe. The crystal ball serves the function of "radar" in a credible fantasy fashion, as does the arrow of enemy detection. However, the altitude gauge might have been handled more effectively as some primitive mechanical device (a la Leonardo da Vinci) or as a "rod" powered by the wizard. The lack of a fictitious explanation for the gauge will bother the purist, but many will simply find the gauge so useful they will not give it a thought.

The most telling deficiency in the interface, however, is the inability to show peripheral vision on the screen. Even though the program is user-friendly enough to automatically resolve close-combat whenever the dragon is in tooth or claw range or the rider is within sword range, the mere presence of the on-screen messages which indicate that one's dragon has attacked the enemy or the player's character has struck the enemy with his/her sword whets the appetite for more on-screen action. To be sure, the present writer is unaware of any way to resolve this disappointment, given the present state of the technology, but the design does have a discouraging tendency to underscore the dimension that is missing.

Finally, one cannot help but wonder about some of the design choices with regard to pacing. In a couple of scenarios, one must fly the dragon across an icy sea or beyond certain geographical points before contact can be made with the enemy. This process of having to fly a specific distance before engaging the enemy is certainly realistic and undoubtedly serves to delineate the distances in Krynn to a scale of simulated time and space. In future *DragonStrike* games, however, it would be nice if the user could toggle this time/space/distance attribute on and off.

On the other hand, the system is wide open enough that players who do not like certain scenarios can always move on to the next ones. The game is set up so that one can play through the scenarios in a narrative order through the three tracks or play whatever scenario one wants, either in sequence or out of sequence. Therefore, the pacing question may be of little consequence to many users.

Verdict from the Lord Clerist

DragonStrike may be the most polished product yet to arrive from the collaboration of **SSI** and **TSR**. It does what many licensed products fail to do, it uses the computer to create something that cannot be done with pencil and paper. In this case, it creates the illusion of dragonflight and combat in an exhilarating fashion. In addition to the usual computer game accoutrements, *DragonStrike*'s package offers colorful player's aid cards that simplify the *Monster Manual* descriptions down to that which is relevant to this game system. Finally, *DragonStrike* enriches the world of computer simulations in general by treating a very unique subject. If the true value of a simulation is to enable players to feel like they have done something that they would not have the opportunity to accomplish in real life, *DragonStrike* is an amazing simulation. **CGW**

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Platoon Survival Techniques

Tips for Microprose's "M-1 Tank Platoon"

By J. Mitchell Cobb


Photo by J. Mitchell Cobb

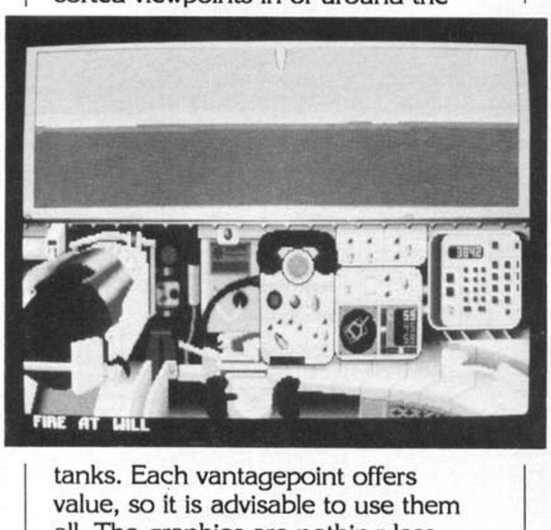


Tanking is a dirty, greasy, and exhausting business. A soldier in an Armor unit spends most of his time fixing his tank; seldom does he *actually fight in it*. Preparation is ninety percent of the battle. His leaders have it even worse. They must care for and encourage their crews; find the food, fuel, spare parts, and ammunition that those tired troops need and, ultimately, plan for the next battle. To a tanker, sometimes it is a relief just to have a target to shoot at!

These are the most obvious differences between Microprose's *M-1 Tank Platoon* and reality. In reality, a leader's job consists of much more planning, coordinating, and other such necessary (and dull!) detail work. The game distills this minutiae into its Outfitting and Briefing screens, allowing players to move their vehicles quickly into the fight. In those battles, the action becomes much more lifelike—visually and tactically.

Visually Rich

M-1 Tank Platoon lets one switch between a map overview and assorted viewpoints in or around the



tanks. Each vantagepoint offers value, so it is advisable to use them all. The graphics are nothing less than stunning. The images on an EGA screen are virtually equal to those of the gunnery simulators used to train military personnel (which uses a minicomputer to process images). The terrain scrolls smoothly as the player's tanks maneuver and the crew positions are accurate, detailed, and fully functional.

There are only two basic difficulties with the display. First, the terrain seems too open. The German countryside is far more wooded, populated, and hilly than *M-1 Tank Platoon* reflects. One rarely sees a full 3000 meters in Central Europe, with much longer lines of sight available in the game. Open terrain, however, does conserve memory in a simulation, so one can understand why Microprose did this. Second, the Soviets do *not* paint their vehicles bright red! Dull brown

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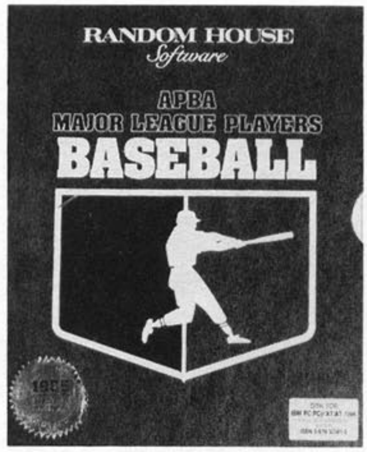
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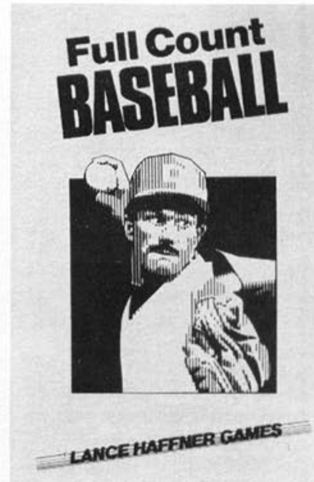
Circle Reader Service #75

BASEBALL IS THE NUMBERS

A Brief Survey of Statistics-Based Text Baseball Games

by Duane E. Widner





"It's a deep fly ball to left... Kirk Gibson's going back... Back . . . He jumps . . . HOME RUN!!"

There is a whole slew of computer baseball games on the market, many featuring awesome graphics with sounds right down to the crack of the bat and packaged in flashy boxes emblazoned with endorsements from big name players. However, there is another room in the house of computer baseball; one which is filled with the stat-based text games. These are the games which produce accurate, *historical* representations in text format rather than graphically depicted grand slams.

The majority of these stat-based products are produced by smaller companies and are, almost exclusively, computer versions of their board-game products. *Strat-O-Matic*, *Lance Haffner Full Count Baseball*, *APBA Major League Players Baseball*, and *Pursue the Pennant PC Baseball* are the major players in this league. Others, like *Radio Baseball*, and *Statis-Pro Baseball* from Avalon Hill, were more "first generation" efforts and are not the focus of this article.

What sets these statistics-based games apart from their more graphic oriented cousins? Statistics-based games are basically text games, showing a scoreboard, current batter, pitcher, baserunners, and the like. All stat-based games use *actual major league statistics* and strive for accurate re-creations of major league performances.

At this point a curious reader may ask, "What's the purpose of playing a statistical game, instead of one with spiffy graphics?". Good question. What if you were the manager of the California Angels and were able to draft and sign Bo Jackson before the Royals got a chance? Would the 1988 pennant race in the AL West have been affected? Using any of the statistics-based games reviewed below, you could make that change, play out the season, and answer that very question. What if you added Babe Ruth to the 1987 Seattle Mariners? Could the Sultan of Swat have raised the lowly Mariners to the promised land? What if Ted Williams had been healthy for the 1950 pennant race? Would Boston have won the flag?

Answering these questions and a thousand more "what ifs" just like them form the *raison d'etre* behind stat-based computer games. The player's role is that of manager, general manager, or league commissioner (instead of merely becoming just another joystick-controlled player).

With this understanding of statistics-based games presented, what follows are brief reviews of the four major statistics-based baseball games for you personal computer:

Strat-O-Matic Baseball: The current king of stat-based board games first put their computer entry on the market in 1986. An exact duplicate of their card-based game, one is almost forced to buy both the computer *and* board games in order to fully enjoy the computerized version. There are two methods of play, manual and automatic. In the manual mode, you actually use the *Strat-O-Matic* cards, and input the results of the play into the keyboard. The Computer becomes the tool for rolling the dice, figuring the odds of stealing or taking the extra base, and other statstics keeping. The automatic version requires a separate data disk for the season you wish to play. You don't HAVE to use the *Strat-o-Matic* player cards, but often you won't know what's going on if you don't! It's obvious this company, operating out of Glen Head, NY, views the player cards as the keystone to their product and are intent on keeping it that way. For statistical accuracy, few games have ever reached the level enjoyed by *Strat-O-Matic*. Many of the intricacies are captured in varying levels of play, with the basic game, advanced and super advanced rules allowing the player to add to the complexity and accuracy of the game at will. *Strat-O-Matic PC Baseball* comes with the manual and advanced games, statistics compiler and league leader utilities. Season data disks and player cards must be purchased separately.STRAT-O-MATIC Game Co., 46 Railroad Plaza, Glen Head, N.Y. 11545, (516) 671-6566, (Apple, C-64, and IBM), $66.25.

Lance Haffner Full Count Baseball: Lance Haffner produces a series of various sport simulations, all programmed in basic. Many past and present teams are available with the baseball game and the most recent past season disks are ready almost as soon as the season is completed. One nice feature is the ability to input your own players and teams. This capability, combined with one's own baseball encyclopedia, allows a player to program virtually anyone that has ever picked up a bat (including his minor league seasons). Statistical accuracy is fairly good, but there are some irritating flaws that cause the basic code to abort the game at inopportune moments. It is possible to play against the computer or play the computer against itself, which is useful for long seasons and getting quick results. This autoplay feature will produce a box score in only a few minutes. *Lance Haffner Full Count Baseball* comes with a variety of past teams, good and bad, all 26 current major league teams, a stat compiler, and

a player/team creation utility. Other season disks and league leader utilities are available separately. Lance Haffner Games, PO Box 100594, Nashville, TN 37210, (615) 242-2617, (Most Formats), $39.95.

APBA Major League Players Baseball: This is another card-based boardgame product turned computerized. It is a clean, well-produced package that has a few interesting features. One of these is the taking an extra base feature. To wit, in most games, a player is given the option of sending a runner on first base the go-ahead to take third on a single to center or right. Naturally, the decision will depend on whether Vince Coleman or Terry Kennedy is running. In *APBA*, the decisions are real-time and, if you don't send the runner, he stays. Unfortunately, the game does not take advantage of all available RAM and accesses the disk drive on every play. That could be a concern over the course of an entire major league season because *APBA* is fairly slow compared to the others (meaning it takes as long as 30 minutes to complete a game). *APBA* comes with the current season disk and the master game disk. Past season disks, stat compiler, and league leader utilities are available separately. APBA Game Company, 1001 Millersville Rd., PO Box 4547, Lancaster, PA 17604-9975, (717) 394-6161, (IBM), $59.95.

Pursue The Pennant PC Baseball: This is the latest entry in the market, and possibly the best. The 2.00 version combines nearly every conceivable feature mentioned above. The game itself allows for the creation of individual players, using one of three sources of information: *McMillan's Baseball Encylopedia*, *The Sporting News*, or *Elias Baseball Analyst*. The games are fast, accurate, and demand both baseball knowledge and good player instincts. This is the only game to provide for up-to-date computer league stats and real-life performance during the game. A transfer stats utility allows league statistics to be added to, subtracted from, or to be used to replace the accumulated statistics on another disk. This is very handy for league play where the games may be played on different computers. A complete stat compiler and league leader utilities are included with *Purse the Pennant*. Past season disks are available separately. Pursue the Pennant, PO Box 38364, Greensboro, NC 27438, (919) 299-4388, (IBM), $69.95

SUMMARY: If the dog days of Summer have you chomping at the bit to replace the manager of your favorite major league team, or you long to become your own "Trader Jack", and wheel and deal your way to a world series, then grab one of these games, a hot dog with mustard, and "Play ball!" **CGW**

RATING THE ENTRIES:

Stat Compiler	Leader Utility	Player Creation	Computer Opponent	Overall Evaluation
Strat-O-Matic				
I	I	N	N	Good
Lance Haffner				
A	A	Y	Y	Average
APBA				
A	A	N	N	Good
Pursue The Pennant				
I	I	Y	N	Excellent

KEY: A=available I=included Y=yes N=no

Final Ballot for the

Origins Awards 1989

Presented by the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design

1. Best Historical Figure Series, 1989
__American Civil War, 15 mm, Stone Mountain Miniatures, Inc.
__American Civil War, 25 mm, Connoisseur, USA.
__Aztecs, 25 mm, Falcon Miniatures
__Republican Romans, 15 mm, Frontier Miniatures
__Seven Years War, Hungarians & Russians, 25 mm, RSM Ltd.

2. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Figure Series, 1989
__Dragonlance AD&D Figures, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
__Fantasy Adventurers, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
__Official AD&D Monsters, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
__Ork Horde, Warhammer 40K, Games Workshop, Inc.
__Shadowrunners, Shadowrun, Grenadier Models, Inc.
__Skeleton Army, Games Workshop, Inc.
__Star Wars Series, Grenadier Models, Inc.

3. Best Vehicular Miniatures Series, 1989
__Battle Titans, Games Workshop, Inc.
__BattleTech Mechs and Vehicles, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
__Dwarf War Machine, Games Workshop, Inc.
__Harpoon Miniatures, GHQ
__Renegade Legion: Centurion Line, FASA Corp.

4. Best Accessory Figure Series, 1989
__Cities of Mystery, TSR, Inc.
__Colonial Guns and Machine Guns, 25 mm, Lyzard's Grin
__Hovels, Medieval and Northern European Buildings, Stone Mountain Miniatures, Inc.
__Warhammer Mighty Fortress, Games Workshop, Inc.

5. Best Miniatures Rules, 1989
__BattleSystem Miniatures Rules, TSR, Inc.
__Napoleon's Battles, The Avalon Hill Game Company, Inc.
__Soldier's Companion, Space:1889, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
__Tactica, Arty Conliffe
__Warhammer 40K Compendium, Games Workshop, Inc.

6. Best Role-Playing Rules, 1989
__AD & D -2nd Edition, TSR, Inc.
__Champions (hardback), Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
__Ghostbusters II, West End Games, Inc.
__Shadowrun, FASA Corp.
__Space:1889, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.

7. Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1989
__Alice Through the Mirrorshades, Paranoia, West End Games, Inc.
__Curse of the Azure Bonds, Forgotten Realms, TSR, Inc.
__Empire of the Witch-king, Middle-earth Roleplaying, Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
__The Great Old Ones, Chaosium, Inc.
__The Ice Man Returneth, Paranoia, West End Games, Inc.
__In Search of Dragons, Dragonlance, TSR, Inc.
__Waterdeep, Forgotten Realms, TSR, Inc.

8. Best Role-Playing Supplement, 1989
__Creatures of the Dreamlands, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium, Inc.
__Imperial Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc.
__Monstrous Compendium, AD&D 2nd Ed., TSR, Inc.
__Shadow World: Master Atlas, Rolemaster & Fantasy Hero, Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc.
__Spelljammer, AD&D, TSR, Inc.

9. Best Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure or Supplement, 1989
__AD & D -2nd Edition, TSR, Inc
__Creatures of the Dreamlands, Call of Cthulhu, Chaosium Inc.
__Imperial Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc
__Lace & Steel, The Australian Games Group
__Shadowrun, FASA Corp
__Spelljammer, AD&D, TSR, Inc.

10. Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1989
__A House Divided, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
__Guns of Cedar Creek, Simulation Design Inc.
__Napoleon at Leipzig, Clash of Arms Games, Inc.
__Rise and Fall, Engelman Military Simulations
__Siege of Jerusalem, The Avalon Hill Game Company Inc.

11. Best Modern Day Boardgame, 1989
__5th Fleet, Victory Games, Inc
__Desert Steel, West End Games, Inc.
__Europe Aflame, TSR/SPI.
__Modern Naval Battles, 3W
__Red Storm Rising, TSR, Inc.

12. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame, 1989
__Battle for Endor, West End Games, Inc
__Dungeon!, TSR, Inc.
__The Great Khan Game, TSR, Inc.
__Space Hulk, Games Workshop, Inc.
__Web of Gold, TSR, Inc.

13. Best Graphic Presentation of a Boardgame, 1989
__5th Fleet, Victory Games, Inc.
__Battle for Endor, West End Games, Inc
__Red Storm Rising, TSR, Inc.
__Space Hulk, Games Workshop, Inc.
__Web of Gold, TSR, Inc.

14. Best Play-By-Mail Game, 1989
__Family Wars, Andon Games
__Illuminati, Flying Buffalo, Inc.
__It's A Crime, Adventures by Mail
__Kings & Things, Andon Games
__Mobius I, Flying Buffalo, Inc.

15. Best New Play-By-Mail Game, 1989
__Beyond the Stellar Empire-The New System, Adventures by Mail
__Orion Nebula, Orpheus Publishing Corp
__Space Combat, Twin Engine Gaming
__Supremacy, Andon Games

16. Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Computer Game, 1989
__Curse of the Azure Bonds, Strategic Simulations, Inc.
__Dragon Wars, Interplay Productions
__MechWarrior, Activision
__Sword of the Samurai, Microprose, Inc.
__War of the Lance, Strategic Simulations, Inc.

17. Best Military or Strategy Computer Game, 1989
__Battles of Napoleon, Strategic Simulations, Inc.
__F-15 Strike Eagle II, Microprose, Inc.
__M-1 Tank Platoon, Microprose Software, Inc.
__Sim City, Maxis
__Their Finest Hour, Lucasfilm

18. Best Professional Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1989
__Challenge, Game Designers' Workshop, Inc.
__Computer Gaming World, Golden Empire Publications
__Dungeon Magazine, TSR, Inc.
__GM, Croftwood, Publishing
__Strategy & Tactics, 3W
__White Wolf, White Wolf Publishing

19. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine, 1989
__The Canadian Wargamers Journal, The Canadian Wargamers Group
__ETO, Bill Stone
__Savage & Soldier, Lynn Bodin
__Volunteers, The Newsletter of Civil War Gaming
__The Zouave, ACW Society

Signature: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

These are the final nominees for the Origins Awards for 1989. Vote for only one nominee per category by checking or marking the line preceding your choice. Fill in your address and sign your ballot. Mail the completed ballot to: Origins Awards Final Ballot, PO Box 3727, Hayward, CA 94544.

The deadline for return of the ballot is June 8, 1990. Ballots postmarked after the deadline will not be counted. The Origins Awards will be presented at Origins '90 in Atlanta, June 28-July 1, 1989. The awards ceremony will be Friday, June 29th. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design will receive a final ballot in the mail. If you have any questions concerning the ballot or the Academy, please write: Origins Awards, PO Box 3727, Hayward, CA 94544.



Scorpion's Tale

A New Generation of Star Trek Games:

The Transinium Challenge

As Told By Scorpia

Well, here we are, chugging through spring into summer. Fred is performing the yearly ritual of spring cleaning (fortunately, when no customers are around). You really *don't* want to see what goes out. (Believe me, you'll feel much better not knowing). Speaking of out, however, this time we're going *far* out—in fact, right into outer space.

Star Trek: The Transinium Challenge is a graphic adventure game, based on the Star Trek Next Generation TV show. You take the part of Commander Riker, who is to lead a mission which will determine if he has the stuff of which starship captains are made. It's up to you to prove that he does.

Unlike other adventure games, *Challenge* has no vocabulary whatsoever. Everything is accomplished through the use of icons and menus; nothing needs to be typed in from the keyboard. This eliminates the usual frustration players have as they try to figure out just how to phrase commands to get things done.

However, that doesn't mean the game is not without other frustrations of its own. *Challenge* is very different from the typical "find object X and figure out what to do with it" adventure. While there are items of importance in the game, most of the action is concerned *with people*. Talking to them, agreeing or disagreeing with their demands and consulting with other crew members is where you will spend a great deal of your time in this intriguing adventure game.

Also, this one is quasi-linear in design. There is no specific, step-by-step, golden path through the game (there are some actions that need to be done early on, or at least before doing some other things). Getting the sequences right is not always easy and will require some trial and error.

Coming into this one with the usual adventure game perspective, therefore, may cause you some problems. You might be rolling along when, suddenly, all the action seems to stop and you have no idea why. Or, you might have trouble simply getting started, because the format and presentation are not of the standard design. So, let's see just what's up with this game . . .

It begins on the bridge of the Enterprise, where a call for help comes in from an asteroid belt in the remote Aquila system. A mysterious ship is terrorizing the area, attacking the various mining installations located on some of the asteroids. Naturally, the Enterprise immediately proceeds there to investigate.

The whole affair is puzzling. Transinium, the ore being mined, is a low-grade mineral of only limited use. While rare, it isn't especially valuable; certainly not worth killing people over. Yet, someone is definitely trying to drive the miners out and doesn't care who gets hurt in the process.

After you've talked to the locals, you might get the feeling that the terrorists may have the right idea (grin). Ms. Jansen, who runs the "El Dorado" operation, is snotty and rude. Mr. Velura and his buddy Smith at "The Doghouse" are a pair of long-winded bores. The Mhulli (a new race) are convinced that the Klingons are behind the attacks, while the Klingons are openly contemptuous of Riker's ability to stop the terrorists. Dr. Parks, a retired scientist, apparently wants peace at any price and practically demands that the Enterprise leave before things get worse. Denning, who runs the local bar, is full of gossip and it's rumored that his drinks are full of more than liquor. There's a Ferengi flitting around, too, although it seems that he has no interest in anything beyond wheeling and dealing.

You could say that Riker has quite a nice little mess on his hands. He'd better clean it up quickly, too, or he'll be relieved of command. What's a poor Star Fleet Officer to do?

Well, the first thing, of course, is to start talking to people. This often means accepting or rejecting proposals they put forth. Each of these should be given careful consideration, as pretty much all of them have an importance in the game. You have to decide on the spot, too, because once you're talking to someone, you can't leave until a choice is made.

Riker doesn't have to go it alone. He can take two crewmembers with him whenever he beams down somewhere (anyone except Picard, who never leaves the ship). These away team members are available for consultation during conversations with the locals. They will offer advice, opinions, and suggestions, but the ultimate choice of action in any situation is always Riker's.

On occasion, the composition of the away team is critical to advancing the plot, and this is particularly so when investigating the abandoned base. Don't get into a rut by always dragging the same people with you. Someone you think is of no use might just be the person you need. If that crewmember isn't in the away team, something important may be overlooked, or a crucial event may never happen.

This, in turn, means you should save often. Many choices trigger the unseen and those effects are not immediately obvious. It may be awhile before the results of a wrong decision rears its ugly head (and by then it's too late to do anything except restore). *Since the game has many hidden complexities, it is a good idea to keep notes of your progress, and exactly where you do your saves.*

One thing which can cause a lot of trouble is not going to the bridge from time to time. It's an easy thing to overlook, because

Continued on page 30

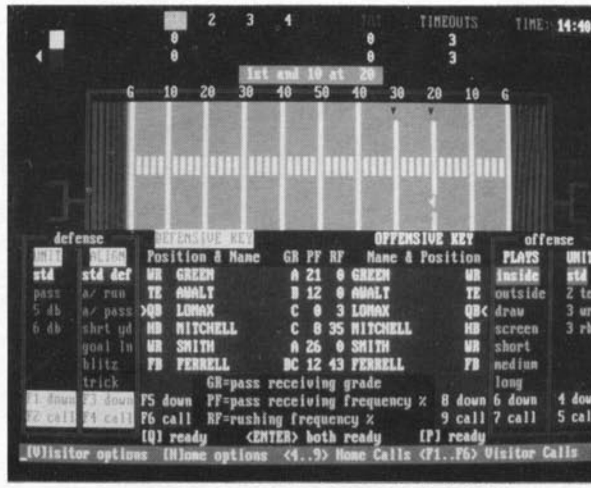


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What's New In Sports Games

by Wyatt Lee

APBA PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL: This is the computer version of the respected boardgame of football strategy. It was developed by the same company and offers the same style of quality play and statistics handling as fans of the classic game have come to expect. Unfortunately, the computer version does not feature enough "idiot proofing" in the interface to keep from frustrating the average user. Pressing a direction key at the wrong time can kick one completely out of the program and the control key layout is extremely awkward for two player games. In addition, the program has some unsightly bugs in the play-by-play feature. Where the descriptions within the play-by-play messages are generally well-written, the program fails to insert the team names from the current game into the messages. So, what should read, "The Bills now have the ball," ends up reading "The now have the ball." Even so, the game plays relatively well once you get used to the flow of play, but the overall feel is of an incomplete product which is only for dedicated aficionados. (**APBA Game Company**, 1001 Millersville Road, Post Office Box 4547, Lancaster, PA 17604-4547).



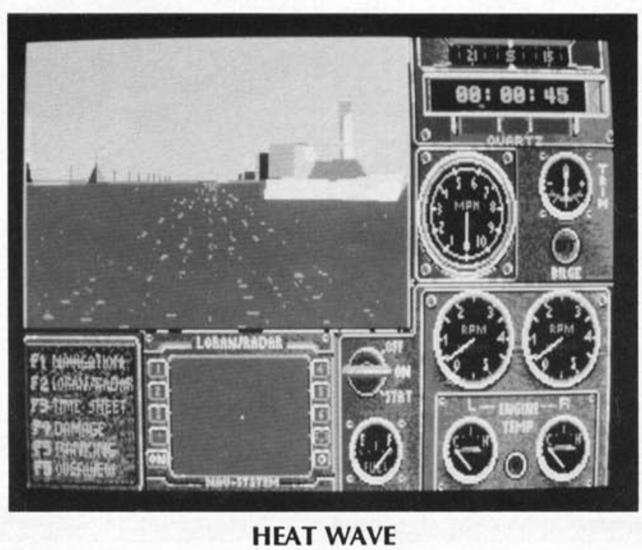
APBA PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL

HEAT WAVE: Offshore Power Boat Racing is a thrilling and colorful spectacle to watch. In **Accolade**'s *Heat Wave*, players become more than spectators. Race preparation includes choices between: four different boats, six pre-set courses or up to ten courses designed by the players themselves, and loading extra fuel, propellers and shafts. The choices are handled efficiently using pop-up windows with menu-driven choices. After the race is set up, players drive the boat from joystick or keyboard, much like any other vehicle simulation. The frame bounces to simulate the look of driving a high speed boat and the polygons scroll by at a nice clip. Players can even choose a lower detail level if they want a faster frame rate. The crashes are dramatic whenever the boats hit the shore, but we were unable to duplicate the most spectacular crashes (where the boats flip and roll) in the sport. The game offers plenty of chrome, though. We were expressly impressed with the helicopter view of the races. (Amiga, $44.95, Atari ST, $49.95, IBM, $39.95, and C-64/128, $29.95).

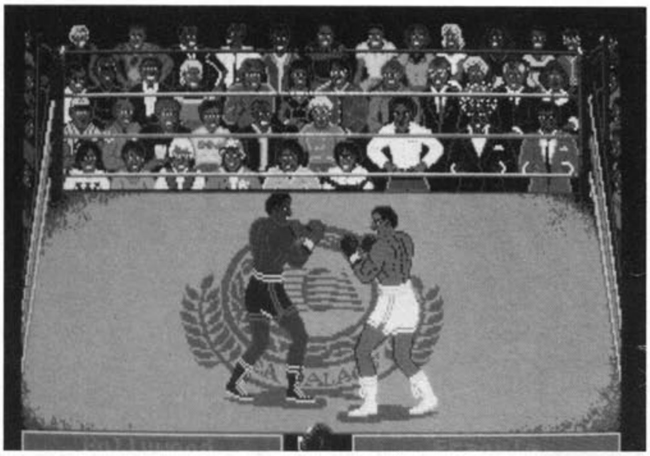
LOW BLOW: Professional boxing was *never* like it is presented in this new action game from **Electronic Arts**. The action is fast, furious and, at times, funny. The interface is simple (the easier to convert to a cartridge game, my dear), the animation is even smoother than the designer's previous *Jordan vs. Bird: One-on-One* product, the tutorial segments fit cleverly into the game's fiction and the pompous, pretentious, purveyance of pugilistic profundity by a ringside personality who seems vaguely familiar ("Who goofed, I've got to know?") is just right for the flavor of the game. At first, the game looks like any number of coin-op and cartridge boxing games, but it provides for a modicum of strategy, as well. Each opponent is susceptible to a certain combination of punches. Players can train for a fight and master that combination before entering the ring. Then, it's a matter of timing and tactics in order for the player's character to climb up the rungs of competition from contender to champion. (IBM, $39.95).

PGA TOUR GOLF: *CGW* received an early look at **Electronic Arts**'s upcoming *PGA Tour Golf* game. The game will feature attractive graphics (polygon-filled with more than 1[illegible] colors in VGA mode) and extremely realistic physical models. Wind is handled dynamically and is a very important factor (it is constantly changing and figures into each shot), club selection is handled according to strict PGA rules and a variety of statistics are now available which were not available in previous games. As the first Professional Golf Association license, the simulation incorporates the expertise of 60 professional golfers. Ten pros will be featured and fifty others had input. The ten featured pros offer helpful comments during fly-bys (aerial views prior to playing the holes) on each hole and the tournaments feature actual "cuts" which the player must avoid. (IBM, $49.95)

TV SPORTS: BASKETBALL: Those who are familiar with the *TV Sports* philosophy of colorful graphics, television-style chrome, and league play will know what to expect from this latest release in the series. The animation is smoother than ever, but the real beauty of this game is the way it handles statistics. In the past, statistics have been strictly a fringe portion of the game and players who wanted to run a league missed the vital ability of being able to print out even the basic statistics on cumulative team performances. Now, those who wish to administer leagues



HEAT WAVE



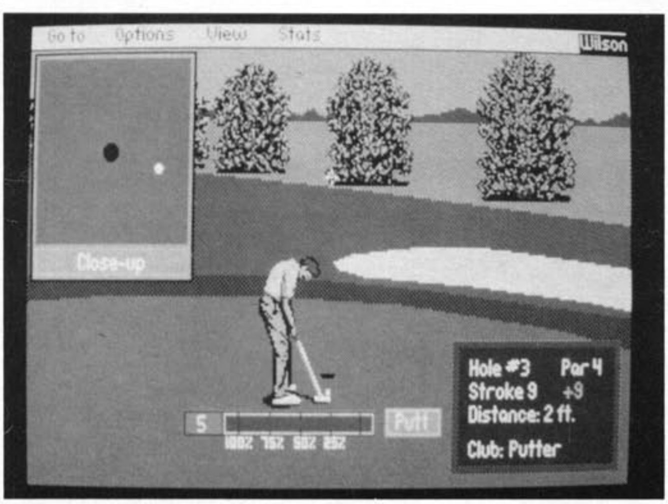
LOW BLOW

have all the usual league statistics available, plus some that **Cinemaware** added as bonus value. Although the heart of the *TV Sports* line has always been in the arcade action, those who like the coaching aspects of sports games will not be disappointed because *TV Sports: Basketball* has a playcalling feature that functions very smoothly within the game framework. As the offensive team crosses the mid-court line, the computer handles the on-screen players while the "coach" inputs a play using a joystick-driven menu/diagram in a window above the court. *TV Sports: Basketball* is a well-balanced arcade/strategy game with more than the usual Cinemaware flair. (Amiga, $49.95).

On-Line Sports

One fascinating way for computer owners to participate in statistics-based sports games is to enter an on-line competition. We have looked at three different ways to compete against other owners in on-line competition: APBA leagues (using the baseball cousin to the football product described earlier in this article) on the **Computer Sports Network**, fantasy baseball on the **USA Sports Network** and fantasy/rotisserie league baseball on **Compuserve**.

COMPUTER SPORTS NETWORK: Like *Tournament Golf*, the networked series of golf tournaments described in *CGW #63* (p. 38), the baseball leagues refereed by the **Computer Sports Network** allow players to connect to the network, make some basic decisions and download information in order to play games off-line using readily available software packages (**Accolade**'s *Mean 18* for *Tournament Golf* and **Random House**'s *APBA Major League Players' Baseball* for the baseball leagues) and upload the game results back onto the network. In this way, one can participate in a human vs. human competition without having to schedule precise times *or* running up exorbitant phone bills. It is an elegant way to eat one's cake and have it, too, by combining the best elements of computer game competition with the excitement of participating in a complete league with other human personalities. (Contact CSN at (713) 952-1060 for further information).



PGA TOUR GOLF

COMPUSERVE: On **Compuserve**, typing "Go Fans" will send players to the area where fantasy/rotisserie leagues are administered. Players can join leagues where they draft major league players, trade via electronic mail, set line-ups and score points based on how the actual professional players perform in real life. Interested parties can download the rules, which are quite exhaustive, and enroll in a league that lasts all season long. The league administrators are authentic baseball fans and will provide players with an incredible amount of support information,



TV SPORTS BASKETBALL

league statistics and benevolent guidance. Essentially, players have $260 in imaginary money to bid on players and establish salaries. The great thing is that these leagues are administered in such a way that they have continuity from year to year. The worst thing is that the initial draft day takes about five hours or so of on-line time, which can be expensive. ($6.00 per hour of on-line time).

USA TODAY: The **USA Today Sports Network** offers fantasy sports with a more casual approach. Players can draft major league stars or adjust their lineups on a weekly basis using an on-line utility. The system stores the fictitious teams thus created and matches two teams together for competition during that particular week. For those with limited funds, but a desire to participate in fantasy baseball on a regular basis, this is the most painless access. In addition to fantasy baseball, the **USA Today Sports Network** offers fantasy basketball and football, NCAA and professional "Pick 'Em" contests during the football and basketball seasons, card game tournaments and strategy boardgame tournaments. Also, when **Data East** releases its *Bo Jackson Baseball* game later this year, players will be able to use the network to download up-to-date statistics and import them directly into the game. (IBM, $29.95). **CGW**

Free Software Catalog with your order!

IBM

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New Star Trek Games

Continued from page 24

(a) you can do almost everything from the transporter room and (b) you do a lot of beaming down, so moving from transporter to bridge doesn't appear worthwhile.

However, if you stay off the bridge, certain events will not take place. The game then seems to stop, and before long, you'll be getting nasty notices from Starfleet about the stagnant nature of the mission. This warning should not be taken lightly. If things don't start happening soon thereafter, Riker will find himself in big trouble. It's a good idea to visit the bridge between beam-downs, and to sometimes hang out there for awhile.

Another easy thing to overlook is asking the crew's opinions about any odd or unusual objects. This includes not only those in the away team at the moment, but also those back on the ship. Contacting them via communicator isn't good enough; they have to be there in person. And don't forget to check Riker's opinions, too (yes, he does have a few of his own).

Re-visiting people and places is a definite must. Sometimes you won't learn or find anything new, sometimes you will. You might (after saving first!) try agreeing to a proposal you refused before, or vice versa, to see what comes of it. Taking different crewmembers might also help.

You can send crewmembers to different places, but this feature is of hardly any use as they can't really do anything on their own. Besides, if you beam someone down, then go off to another location, that person will automatically beam back up before the ship leaves.

Sooner or later, Riker will start encountering the mystery ship, and this always begins combat. It's best not to try anything fancy; just pound away at it. Catching the intruder will clear up a lot of the mystery over the who and why of the mining attacks. In fact, this is the only way of stopping the terrorists, so pulling out of battle is not recommended. Just don't expect to catch them easily.

Triumph in space combat is not the end, however. There is still more to be done, especially in regard to the mysterious children. Who they really are, what they want, and what to do about the intruder's revelations, make up the endgame portion of the adventure. This part, though, is fairly straightforward, and should not give adventure gamers much trouble. You'll know when everything's done, as the game will go into the final automated sequences, followed by congratulatory messages from both Starfleet Command and Captain Picard.

Well, I see by the old invisible clock on the wall, it's that time again. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Visit the Games Roundtable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

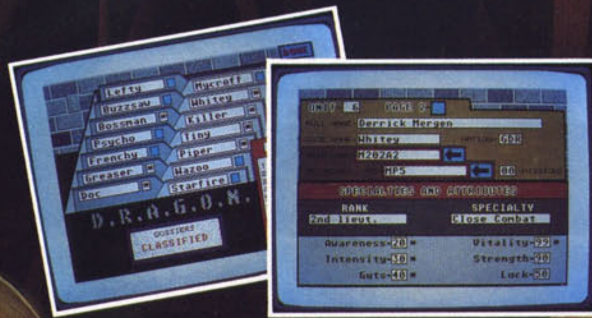
Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

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The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first person perspectives of real world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take your alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventures (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

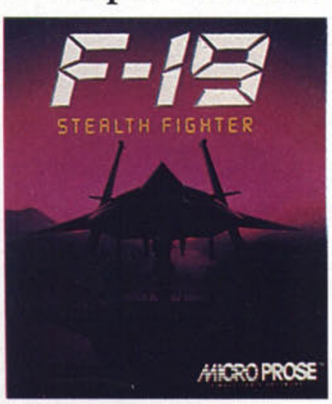
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of this specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machine	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*I*	*AC,SI*	*71*	*10.51*
2.	*F-19 Stealth Fighter*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI*	*87*	*9.84*
3.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*I*	*WG*	*58*	*9.76*
	SimCity	*Maxis*	*Many*	*ST,SI*	*104*	*9.76*
5.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI,WG*	*67*	*9.71*
6.	*Populous*	*EA*	*Am,I,ST*	*ST*	*98*	*9.43*
7.	*Starflight 2*	*EA*	*I*	*RP*	*43*	*9.41*
8.	*Red Storm Rising*	*MicProse*	*C,I,ST*	*SI*	*70*	*9.22*
9.	*Battlehawks 1942*	*LucasFilm*	*Am,I,ST*	*AC,SI*	*85*	*9.21*
10.	*Lords of Rising Sun*	*Cnmwre*	*Am*	*AC,ST*	*54*	*9.19*

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
11.	Sword of Aragon	SSI	I	ST,WG	33	9.15
12.	MechWarrior	Activision	I	SI,RP	48	9.13
13.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	I	AD,RP	43	9.09
14.	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	120	9.04
15.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	102	9.03
17.	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
18.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
19.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	Am,I	AD	23	8.93
	Overrun	SSI	Ap,C	WG	24	8.93
21.	Sword of Samurai	MicProse	I	ST,RP	44	8.92
22.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
23.	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
24.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C,I	RP	29	8.84
25.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	Ap,C,I	RP	54	8.81
26.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
27.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	32	8.79
	Project Stealth Ftr	MicPr	C	SI	29	8.79
29.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Fire Brigade	Panther	Am,I,M	WG	22	8.77
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	I	AD	47	8.77
33.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	Micprose	I	SI	57	8.76
35.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
36.	Indianapolis 500	EA	I	SI	27	8.74
37.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Ap,C,I	AD	33	8.70
38.	Battlechess	Interplay	Am,I,ST	ST	58	8.68
39.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	70	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
41.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,ST,I	AC	20	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	Many	ST	44	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
45.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
46.	Sword of Sodan	Discovery	Am,GS	AC	27	8.63
47.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	116	8.61
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	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
53.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
54.	Breach 2	Omnitrend	Am,I,ST	ST	22	8.48
55.	Hostage	Mindscape	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47

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Ultima IV
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Wizardry

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56.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	37	8.44
57.	688 Attack Sub	EA	I	SI,ST	48	8.42
	Manhunter 2	Sierra	I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
59.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
60.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
62.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37
63.	It Came Frm Desert	Cnmware	Am,ST	AD	34	8.36
64.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
65.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
66.	Gold of Americas	SSG	Am,I	ST	25	8.28
67.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
68.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
69.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
70.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
72.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
73.	Battlegroup	SSI	Ap,C	WG	36	8.19
74.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	I	AD	30	8.17
75.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
76.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
77.	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
78.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
79.	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
	Zork Series	Infocom	Many	AD	218	8.09
81.	Faery Tale Adventure	Micllsn	Many	RP	59	8.07
82.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
83.	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
84.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	I,C	RP	71	8.04
	Techno-Cop	Epyx	C,ST	AC	23	8.04
86.	Test Drive II	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC	42	8.02
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91.	Jordan vs Bird	EA	C,I	AC	47	7.96
92.	Omega	Origin	Many	ST	49	7.92
	Prophecy	Activision	Am,I	AD	32	7.92
94.	Ghostbusters II	Activision	I	AC	29	7.91
95.	Wizardry V	Sir-Tech	Ap,I	RP	43	7.88
96.	Eternal Dagger	SSI	Many	RP	72	7.85
97.	Lakers vs Celt	EA	I	AC	27	7.83
98.	Rommel	SSG	Ap,C	WG	20	7.80
99.	Mean Streets	Access	C,I	AC,AD	31	7.75
100.	Anc Art of War At Sea	Brodbnd	I,M	ST	108	7.74

Top Strategy



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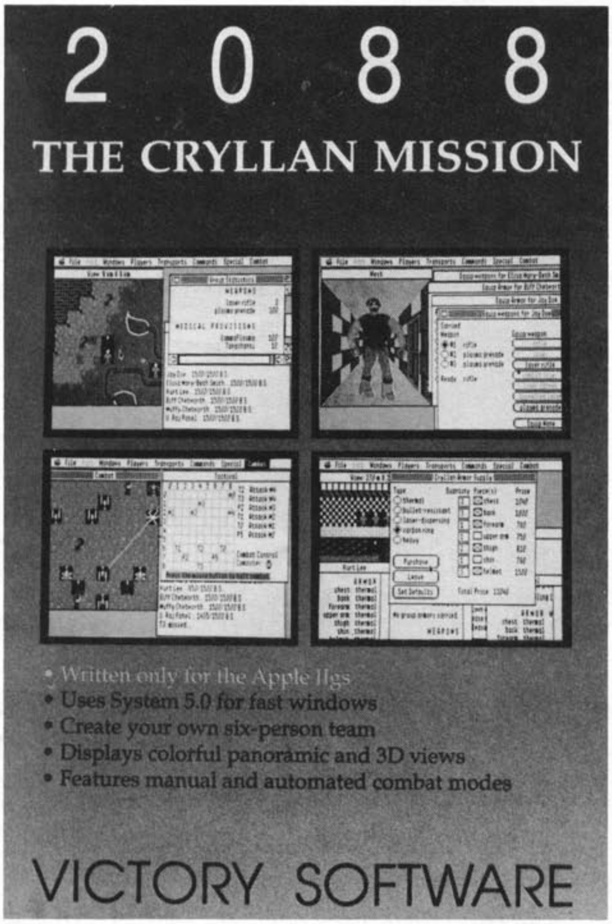


Top Wargame



2088: The Cryllan Mission

by Dennis Owens



When the crew of the spacecraft U.S.S. Houston, on a mission of exploration in a previously uncharted region of the galaxy, discovered a planet, the scientists at Mission Control cheered. When the crew reported that the planet appeared inhabited—and that the lifeforms seemed intelligent, humanoid, and completely devoid of any type of aggressive, warlike behavior—the Earth's population was astounded.

Now, six months after the planet was supposed to have passed from behind its mother star, and communications with the Houston's crew, which had been blocked, were supposd to have resumed, there has been no word from the planet

TITLE:	2088: The Cryllan Mission
SYSTEM:	Apple IIGS
PRICE:	$69.95
DESIGNERS:	Vivek and Vinay Pai
PUBLISHER:	Victory Software P.O. Box 821381 Houston, TX 77282-1381

known as Crylla. Messages radioed toward the star system have been answered only by the quiet, threatening hiss of deep space.

A new crew must be assembled: a team of scientists, soldiers and doctors. A new craft must be sent toward Crylla, and the mystery of what happened to the original crew must be solved. Your crew's lives, of course, are as expendable as those red-shirted crew members on the old Star-Trek series and Mission Control has no idea of the conditions you will face.

Written specifically for the Apple IIGS, *2088: The Cryllan Mission*, by **Victory Software**, is a science-fiction hybrid of *Ultima III* and *Wasteland* which combines enough new features, deft uses of the IIGS' abilities, and innovative twists on old gaming standbys to present a game that is both promising in its possibilities and frustrating in not carrying those promises far enough.

2088 plays smoothly once the player gets used to its rhythms, flow of windows, combat options, and mouse/keyboard interactions. Its premise is imaginative, consistent and, unfortunately, limited in the way it is carried out. For instance, although Vivek and Vinay Pai, the game's designers, tout its unique use of windows and menus (through Apple's system 5.0) to access everything from combat options to conversation with NPCs, real interaction with NPCs is *extremely* limited because of the inherent nature of windows. Questions are impossible and topics are addressed by clicking on the same few standard choices: introduction, background, new topic, and more detail.

Once NPCs are met, they need never be addressed again. It is entirely possible for an unscrupulous player to pick every NPC's brain in the city and then slaughter the entire population. Such behavior might, of course, be considered relatively antisocial. Still, there is no reason to keep these little bumping icons around to impede one's journey through useless repeated contact and, even though the experience points gained might be slight, there is *some* reason to do *something* with them other than just talk to them (a stance shared, sadly, by the game's most heinous villain).

Make no mistake; *2088* does require the player to make certain ethical choices. Once the true horror of the situation on Crylla is uncovered, the player must do something. There is nothing in the game requiring the player to kill every creature he encounters in the wilderness. However, when the game limits the player's interactions with the outdoor's creatures to either attack or do nothing, what else is a game player going to do? Quit the game? Attack only the creatures which attack the party?

(A side note: *2088* cannot be won if the latter strategy is followed. Thus, some consideration of moral conduct must be made. But, come on, what else would a "real gamer" do? Plunk down his money and then not finish the game? Seriously,

Continued on page 36

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2088: The Cryllan Mission

Continued from page 34

when it comes to seeing that end-game victory screen, other considerations are often made secondary).

In this age of computer gaming, with the sophistication of the moral dilemmas faced in *Ultima V* and *Wizardry IV*, the question of how to correct a society corrupted by outsiders is an enticing one. However, the question is not, in this reviewer's opinion, satisfactorily examined by *2088*.

The game is also rather combat intensive. Once the characters in the party of six each reach about 8000 in body status, the party becomes well-nigh invincible (and that is nowhere near the amount of body points the characters can wind up with). Although a single hit from a monster can cost a character 600 body points, with strong armor, good weapons, and a fair supply of Gamma-Plasma (restores body status), no encounter is unwinnable.

Toward the end of the game, combat sequences will have occurred so often, and will have begun to take up such a large amount of the time spent in playing the game, that one might want to avoid them completely in the interests of saving time. Whole sections of caverns and buildings can be left unexplored (as long as the player has found whatever it was he was looking for).

The 3-D perspective in dungeons is colorful. At times plain in design, at others, original, the parties of monsters also can be seen one behind the other when the characters' party has stumbled upon a hallway full of beasties.

In a game with the scope and visual complexity of *2088*, such dichotomies are common. Weapons can be sold back to stores, but armor cannot. Further, only the most common weapons can be sold, and not the top-of-the-line "specials" (which, seemingly, would attract the highest prices); almost all functions are most easily handled by mouse (but the most redundant are handled the quickest by keyboard), ad infinitum.

Overall, *2088: The Cryllan Mission* marks a promising entrance into the still underdeveloped market of IIGS-specific software by a new company. Especially since rumors have the *Ultima* series moving away from the Apple II, support for such an encouraging debut is almost mandatory for IIGS role-playing enthusiasts. The game supports hard drive, mouse and keyboard interfaces, and requires 1.25 MEG of RAM to run. **CGW**

The Great Race

A Driver's View Of Electronic Arts' Indianapolis 500



Barry Werger has been an autocross champion, a racing steward, and a member of the New York Region SCCA Race Management Committee. He is currently taking a break from racing to live the life of a poet at Risley Castle in Ithaca.

by Barry Werger

TITLE:	Indianapolis 500 The Simulation
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	David Kaemmer Richard Garcia
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Computer Gaming World regulars may be wondering why I am writing this review instead of just dictating "expert" quotes to my friend, Charles Ardai *[Ed: As he did in "Once Around the Block," CGW #57, p. 45.]*. The explanation is simple. *Indianapolis 500* is billed not as a game but, rather ominously, as *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation*. Readers will recall that Charles has refused to get into an actual race car and may not be surprised that at the sight of such a realistic simulation, he panicked. Let's just say his therapist is working overtime.

I'm happy with the way things worked out, however. It takes a true motor-sports enthusiast, at least, to appreciate the intricacy of this program. The game is not only a hyper-realistic simulation but a valuable educational tool for any aspiring race car driver.

A Month At the Races

The amount of research that went into the game is obvious as soon as one cracks the surprisingly detailed instruction manual. Not content with spelling out the mechanics of the game, it offers a wealth of information on the entire spectacle and history of racing's most celebrated event. All facets of the race are covered, from a driver's month-long schedule of pre-race activities to the layout of the speedway complex, including bathroom locations. There is even a section of photographs of Indy winners throughout history which doubles as a clever anti-piracy device. Welcome as this vast store of information is, however,

This is a game for those who take racing seriously.

most of it is non-essential to the simulation. What *is* important is the detailed and lengthy explanation provided of suspension configuration and how its



modification affects a car's handling.

The suspension elements that players can adjust include: shock absorbers, wheel stagger, camer, anti-roll bars, tire pressure and rubber compound; also adjustable are the car's downforce-generating wings and transmission gearset.

Remarkably, not only do all these settings noticeably affect the car's handling, but they interact so thoroughly that one has to remain constantly aware of their potential for cancelling effects on one another.

To allow players to experiment with various car set-ups, the simulation provides a practice session in which one can alter any of the car's characteristics at any point on the track (Note: In the Qualifying and Race sessions, only a few such modifications are possible once the race is underway and these can only be made in the pits.). In fact, the settings can be so intricate that players will want to start with the default settings the first few times out.

On the Right Track

Since racing games typically offer a variety of unusual track shapes, one might expect a game limited to a plain oval to be tedious. In *Indianapolis 500*, this is *not* the case. The realities of handling a car at more than 220 mph are so well-represented as to make even the straightaways a challenge. When one takes into account additionally the interaction with fellow racers and the constant attention one must pay to wear on the vehicle's various components, it becomes obvious that this simulation is anything but boring. It also becomes obvious that this is a game for those who take auto racing seriously. Gamers looking for immediate gratification should stick to *Out Run*.

Even with all its technical sophistication,

the game is highly entertaining. The graphics (in VGA mode, at least) are astounding. Although individual objects (the cars, the track walls, etc.) are not particularly well detailed, the changes in perspective that occur as one moves around the track leads one to believe that the entire world of the speedway is effectively contained within the computer. Adding to this illusion of reality are the six camera angles available for instant replay, which can be called up at any time: driver's view, behind the car, track mounted, grandstand, helicopter, and leader/crash. (The last shows important events which the driver might not have been able to see from his car.)

The only disappointment in the game is the PC soundtrack. Every sound the game makes with the internal speaker is annoying, at best, and unbearable at worst. One loses something if one plays with the sound turned off, however, because some sounds (especially the squealing of tires) are important indicators of the car's performance. *[Ed: Of course, those who have Ad Lib and Roland sound boards will not have this problem. The soundtrack is outstounding with these boards.]*

The controls are very responsive. While utilizing the keyboard effectively takes a lot of practice, it is quite functional once one gets used to it. If one should happen to have access to a joystick, however, control is natural and transparent. Steering is highly responsive, a pleasant surprise after so many recent sluggish driving games.

Checkered Flag

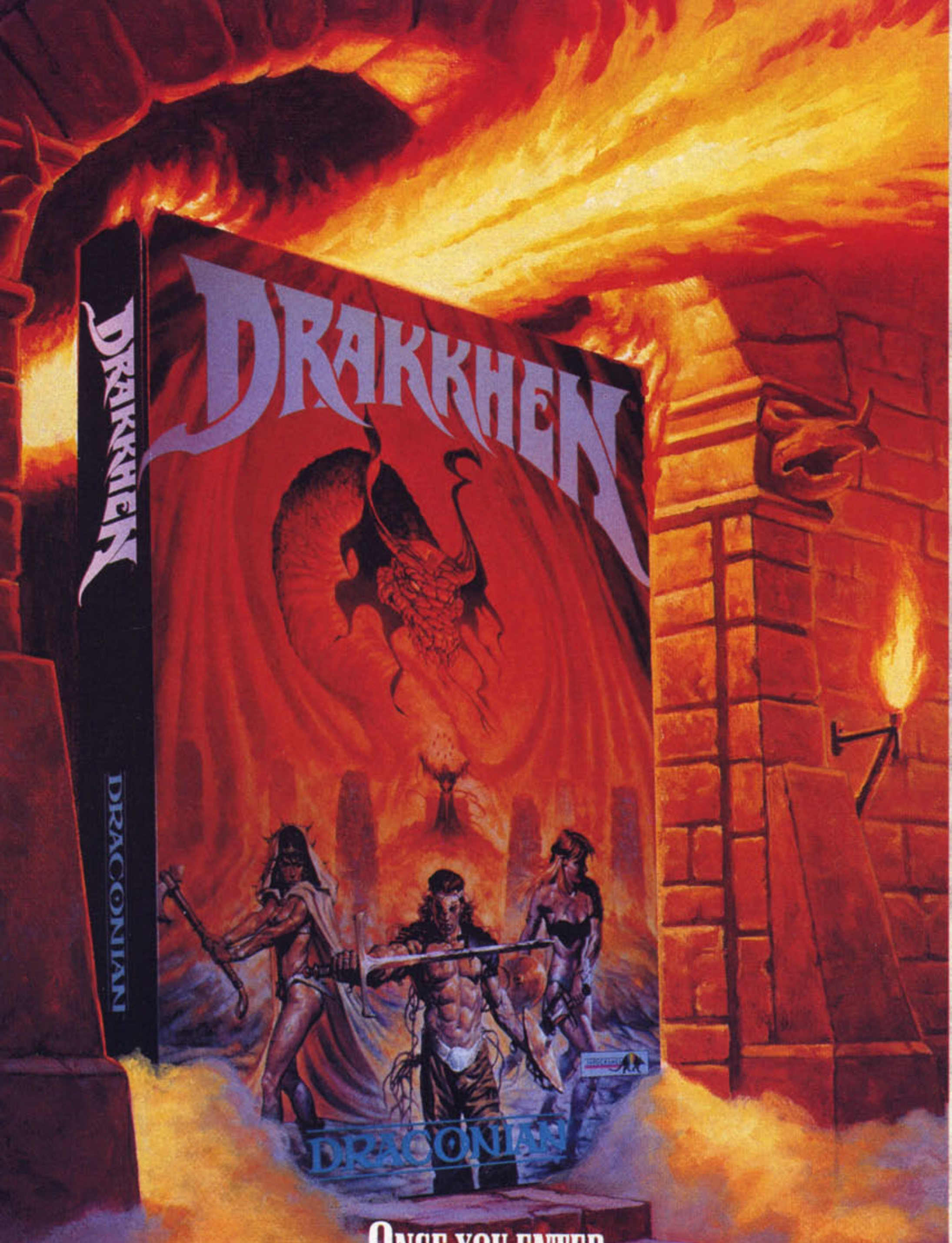
Any serious attempt to master *Indy 500* will require a great deal of practice—perhaps, also a little madness. Each suspension change requires many laps of testing and each complete set-up means hours of (re-)learning how to drive smoothly. Only the most dedicated and determined players will ever win a race (Of course, this is the way it is in real life, too . . .).

This means that *Indy 500* is not for everyone. (Charles, you can come out now!) For gamers who might actually be interested in racing some day, it offers invaluable experience; for die-hard simulation nuts, it offers a truly in-depth portrait of its subject; but for casual gamers it can offer headaches and heartache and hair-pulling frustration. Keep this in mind, readers—you know who you are. **CGW**

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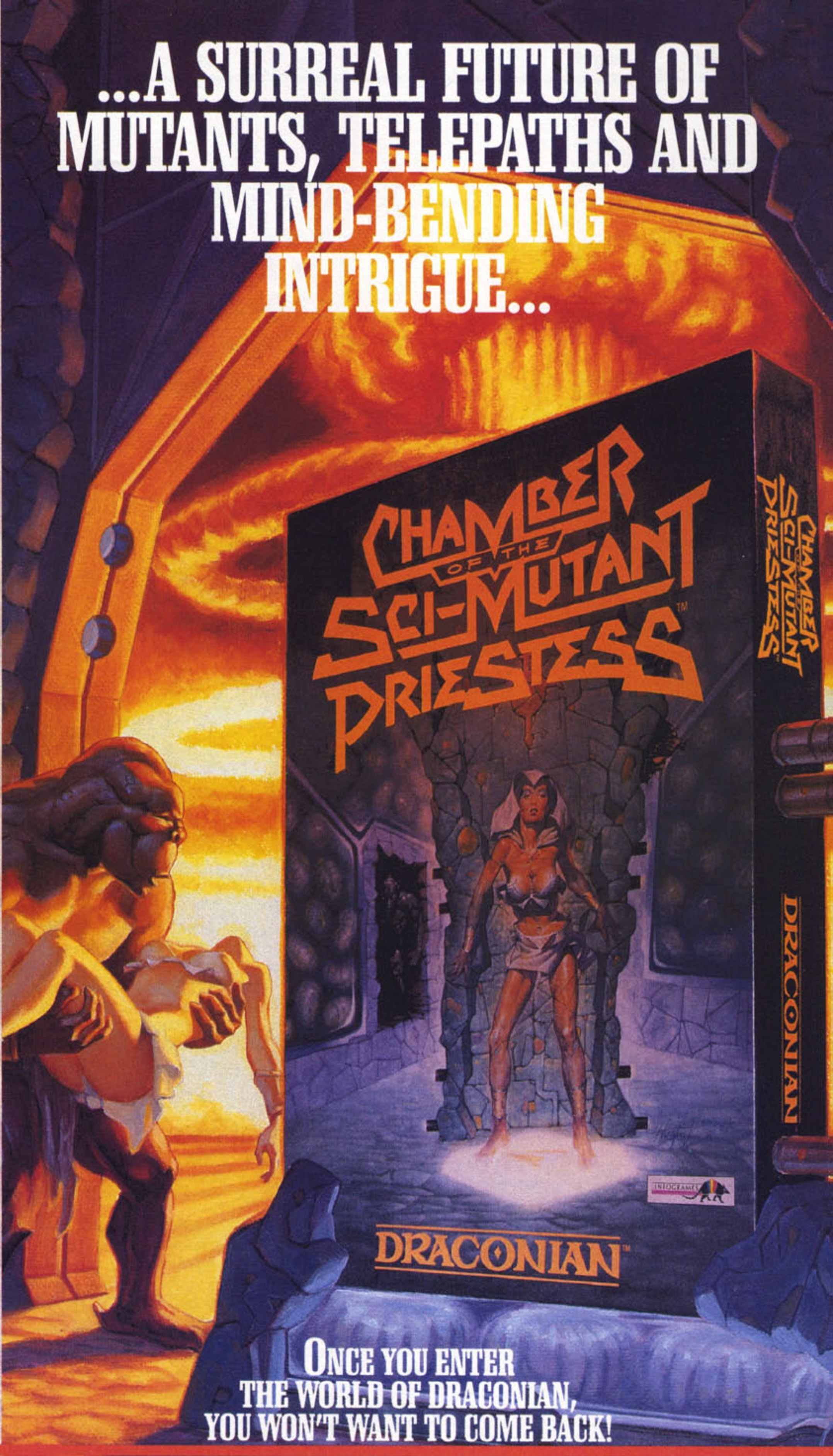
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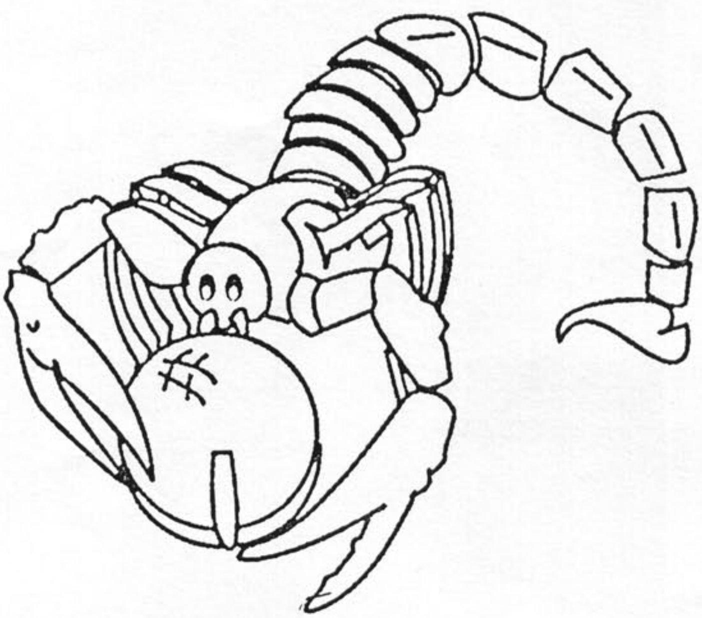
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Circle Reader Service #79

Scorpion's View

Scorpia Stings Playtesting and Apple-Plexy



Over the last few years, there has been a distressing trend in computer games in general, and not merely in the adventure/CRPG genres, either. Too many releases have hit the racks with flaws and bugs that should never have been in a production version. I'm not speaking of minor problems, but major gaffes that seriously interfere with game play: unwinnable conditions, game crashes, seams that allow wholesale cheating, areas that are never activated, awkward and hard-to-use interfaces, poor combat balance and infuriating parsers, to name just a few.

There are several reasons for this, the major ones being the lack of adequate playtesting in the first place and insufficient time allowed for testing and the fixing of problems in the second. Playtesting is one of the most important factors in the development of any game. Yet, it seems that in recent times, it has been taking a back seat to getting a product out the door.

Good playtesting requires a fair amount of dedication, as well as tough-mindedness and independence of thought. While there are some good playtesters out there, there are too many people who see playtesting mainly as a way of getting their hands on a particular game well in advance of everyone else. They are generally not aware that playtesting means more than simply running through a game and noting where it crashes or where strange things happen.

These people (and there *are* too many of them) view the test versions more as finished products, and play them that way, thereby missing many of the problems in the code. They just never see them, and no one knows about them, until the game is in the hands of the paying customers, and by then it's too late. This is *not* testing a game!

Non-testing can also come about when companies provide hint sheets, walkthroughs, maps or other aids to their testers. The temptation to use these crutches is almost irresistible. It may cut down on testing time, but it does not give the product the rigorous workout that is necessary, and which can come only from going through the game knowing no more than an average customer will.

So what makes a good playtester? Patience, intelligence, an eye for detail, a sense of humor, a good knowledge of the game's genre, enthusiasm, and a critical turn of mind are all, in my opinion, necessary qualities.

Good playtesters take nothing for granted. If the command card lists only sixteen keys in use, they will still try every key on the board to see what happens. If something is listed as being impossible, they will try it anyway, just to be sure.

They step on every square in the dungeon, walk through every door, talk to everyone several times over, try out any number of bizarre commands, and in general proceed through the game with as much thoroughness as they can. They do this because they aren't trying to "win"; they're looking for trouble spots of all kinds, which, after all, is what testing means.

Now certainly, there are testers out there who are like this. They do a good job and are generally worth their weight in gold for the work they do on the games. Then, why is it that, in spite of such people, some products come out in such terrible shape?

The answer is time. It is often the case that not enough time is allowed for a game to be properly put through the mill. This is, in turn, related to the fact that many games today are extremely complex (in terms of code) and the trend is toward even more complexity as ever more powerful machines continue to appear on the market.

With the average game taking two years or more to develop and program, pressure from the general public, not to mention marketing departments, has a tendency to put a severe damper on anything that will keep the product from going out the door. Companies become reluctant to make too many changes, as changes mean, naturally, more testing and more time before the game goes on sale. That nasty word "deadline" gets bandied about, corners are cut where possible, and suddenly, the customer finds in his hands a game that isn't really finished.

What can be done about this? First, game companies must come to realize and accept that they have a responsibility to provide the paying customers with a product that is not buggy and only partly-tested. This means finding *good* playtesters, and allowing them sufficient time to do their job. It is worth moving back deadlines when a better product will result.

However,the ultimate responsibility rests with you. You are the paying customer who puts down $40, $50, $60 or more for a game. If you find the game is not up to standard, if it's full of bugs or crashes, if you feel that you're not getting your money's worth, don't just sit there and take it! You'll only get more of the same in the future.

Tell your friends, so they don't get stuck. Write letters to the game company, expressing your displeasure, and demand better quality control. Tell them exactly why you are not pleased (*this is very important*). A letter that says "Game X is junk" will go into the trash basket; one that begins "Game X is a flawed product, and here's why" will get attention. This is especially true if a lot of letters start arriving with the same complaints.

Continued on page 52

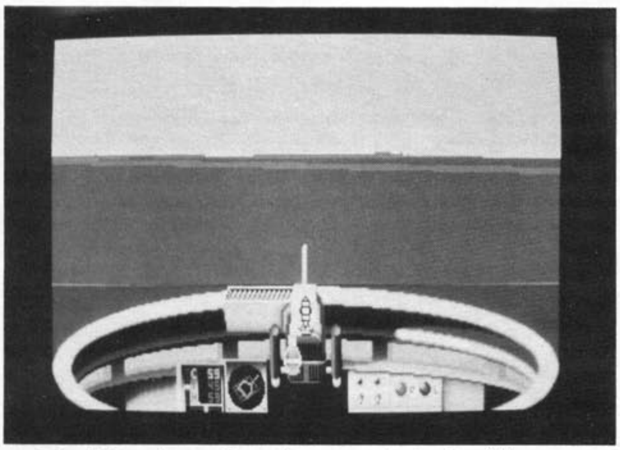
M1 Tank Strategy

Continued from page 18

or dark green would have been more appropriate.

The Tanks Behave Like Real Tanks

Gamers can assume control over any of the positions in any of their tanks except for the Loader's. When assumed, one can perform the functions of that crewman. Additionally, it is possible to issue orders to the rest of the crew. Those crewmen, and the ones in the other tanks, will perform according to their individual skill levels (and possibly, improve over time). The Tank Commander primarily finds targets; the Gunner shoots them; the Loader feeds the gun; and the Driver gets one where he needs to go. Most gamers will find that they, personally, are often their own best crewmen. The trick is knowing where to be at the right time.



The View from the Commander's Position (Unbuttoned)

Of all the crew positions, the Gunner's station is the most versatile and realistic. From it, after one has moved the tank to a hull-down (barely exposed) position, one can find targets at long ranges and shoot at them before they even have an idea or firing back. The firing sequence is easy enough—laser (with the spacebar) and blaze (hit return), just like in a real tank! If the ballistic computer or laser rangefinder has been knocked out, use the Battlesight gunnery, which the manual has documented very well. One problem which seems immediately obvious to "real life" tankers is the need to "lead" a target. Although the manual says to simply track a moving target, one must lead it by half of a vehicle length to insure a hit. In a real tank, one just tracks it and shoots.

The Soviets Behave Like Real Soviets (Usually)

The manual gives a superb explanation of Soviet tactics and the program implements them well. The computer Soviets maneuver very authentically when on the offense. Their combination of mass and momentum is very hard to stop. However, they perform less effectively than I would expect actual Soviet troops to defend.

Individual Soviet vehicles defend passively in the game, and rarely move. A good rule of thumb to remember is: if one is spotted, look for two more. If three are spotted, look for more close by. Sometimes, a Company (9 to 10 vehicles) will all sit together, and only three of them can see over the hill in front to shoot. Other times, they will simply sit out in the open, with no cover at all. Even though they are defending a strong point, the vehicles all face west, and do not secure their flanks. It becomes easy for one's platoon to utterly destroy a defending enemy much larger than itself. This situation contrasts very much with current Army doctrine requiring a 3-to-1 odds advantage in the attack. Usually the military employs an attacking *company* to defeat a defending *platoon*!

TC's Know Less Than They Should

Unfortunately, this lack of flexibility works both ways. The U.S. Tank Commanders are continually frustrating, because they cannot independently execute any but the simplest orders or drills ("Who *are* these guys and what are they doing in *my* platoon?"). One must *personally* perform two of the most important defensive drills for each tank: berm drills and Sagger dances. This vital requirement can overwhelm a player when more than one tank is engaged.

Berm drills and Sagger dances are vital tasks.

A berm drill involves moving a tank from a hidden position to a hull-down position, firing a few shots, and backing up before the enemy can return fire. Every tanker learns this basic technique on his first gunnery range, and it is usable whenever one has some cover to hide a tank behind. Once in a hull-down position for a stationary tank, it can overwatch for others as they move. However, once the tank starts taking fire, the player has to back it out of danger himself.

Photo by J. Mitchell Cobb



M1 Performing a Berm Drill

At this point, a player must shift his attention again because any moving tank is more exposed and probably also drawing fire. To save a tank drawing enemy fire, enter the Driver's hatch and *dodge violently*! Move randomly from side to side at top speed and head for some kind of cover. This makes one's tank a less predictable target, and incoming shots,

especially slower missiles, will be less likely to hit. The origin of the term "Sagger dance" should be very obvious.

Halting The Horde

Successfully defending in the game is quite difficult. The Soviets usually set the tempo of the battle by their speed; one can be rushed and overwhelmed before he knows it. To defeat a Soviet offensive requires three basic principles: identify a Kill Zone, disperse forces correctly, and concentrate high volumes of fire.

To identify a Kill Zone, look at where the enemy is coming from and where he is headed. Assume he will detour slightly to take advantage of available cover. Then, decide on an area 1000 to 3000 meters before the well-covered position to which they



The View from the Gunner's Position

are headed. This will be the optimal area for killing most of the enemy forces (i.e., the Kill Zone).

Next, identify where each vehicle will maneuver, including attached units. Place them where they can fire into the Kill Zone previously laid out. One must be careful not to bunch the tanks in the platoon too close together. Vehicles on the flanks of a U-shaped pocket are less likely to be spotted and will be firing at the lighter, side armor of the approaching enemy tanks.

The first two steps, that of determining a Kill Zone and deciding how best to position friendly forces to take advantage of it, can be done by careful study of the briefing map. The last step, killing the enemy tanks, requires some rapid keyboard action on the player's part. Ideally, friendly units should volley fire as the enemy enters the Kill Zone, with artillery coordinated to hit at the same time. In the game, the best a player will probably manage is a ragged ripple-fire effect, since it is not possible to get

everyone to move up and fire concurrently. *If a tank receives individual orders, it will not respond to a platoon order.* Disregard artillery; except for smoke, it is virtually useless in *M-1 Tank Platoon*. Skilled loaders will give one's tanks the best rate of fire. Be sure to combine a skilled loader with a good gunner to make each shot count.

After Action Review (Conclusions)

M-1 Tank Platoon is easily the best armchair simulation of armor tactics that this author ever seen. It compares very favorably with the Army's specialized simulators. Some minor improvements could result in a much better product, however, especially creating additional routines for dealing with subordinate tanks maneuvering out of enemy fire. They would give the Tank Commanders more autonomy, but the documentation describes autonomy as an American strength.

U.S. Army Photo



M1 Tank in a Teeth-Jarring Advance

Where should the industry go from here? This author has a "wish list" for the next generation of simulations. Modem-based, head-to-head play is a *must* in any new game. Establishing one's own unit Standard Operating Procedures via macros or Omega-style artificial intelligence would be nice. Finally, the inclusion of obstacles, fortifications and resupply operations would add a great deal of realism (and complexity!) to the simulation.

Until the next generation arrives, though, this author strongly recommends *M-1 Tank Platoon* to anyone interested in modern armored tactics. Not only does one get a versatile game, but the documentation concisely and accurately addresses the philosophy behind the design and use of modern tanks. This author intends to use this program to help train his own tank platoon—and that is high praise indeed! **CGW**

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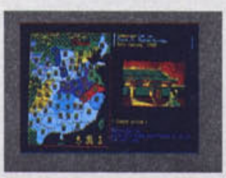
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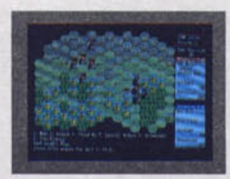
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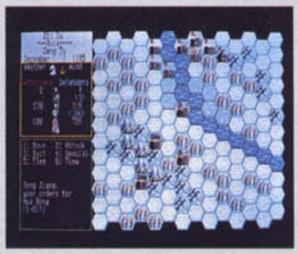
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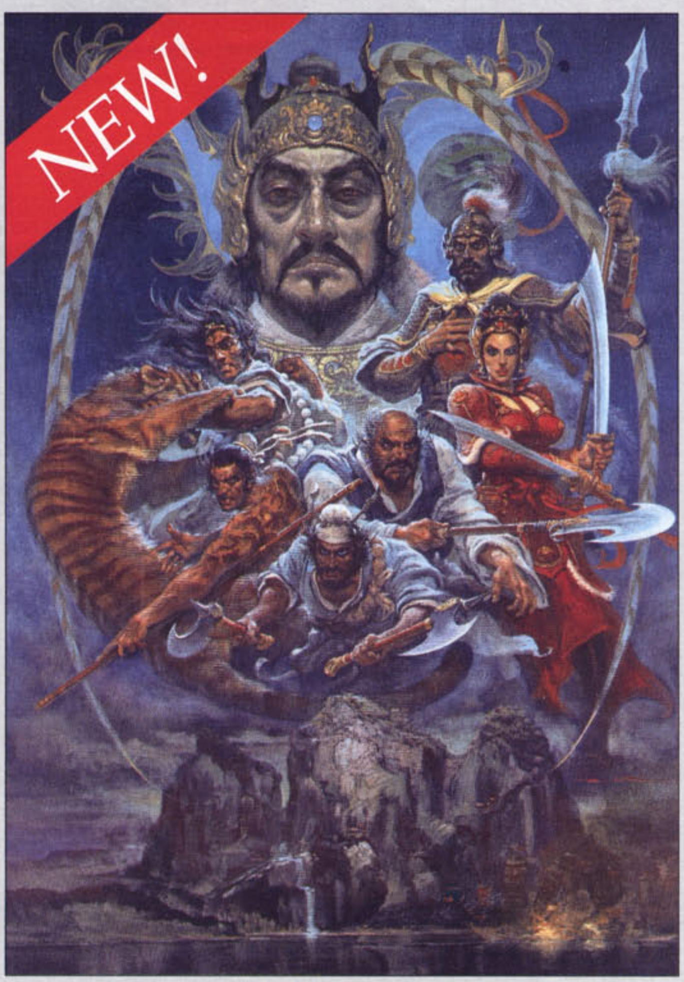








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 Circle Reader Service #81

Inside the Industry



Access Unveils "World Class Leader Board: VGA"

At the recent **Software Publishers Association** meeting, held at the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego, California, graphics wizard Steve Witzel provided *CGW* with a sneak preview of the artwork (pictured) to be used in *World Class Leader Board: VGA* (working title). The game will use advanced "shading" techniques developed by Witzel to soften the normally unrealistic edges of the polygon-filled technology and offer a more natural looking fairway. Note that the screen pictured is not complete in that the trees lining the fairways have not yet been added.

Sierra Purchases Dynamix

As of March 27th, **Sierra On-Line**, publishers of *The Colonel's Bequest, King's Quest IV*, and *Space Quest III* (among others) reached an agreement in principle to purchase Oregon-based **Dynamix**, developers of *Arcticfox, Caveman Ughlympics, Skyfox, Skyfox II* and *Project Firestart* for Electronic Arts, *F-14 Tomcat, MechWarrior* and *DeathTrack* for **Activision**, as well as *A-10 Tank Killer* and *David Wolf, Secret Agent* under the **Dynamix** label. The purchase of Dynamix offers great versatility for Sierra. Dynamix is reported to have several worthy products under development, including: a World War I flight simulator (probably entitled *Red Baron*), *Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon*, an adventure game with what seems to be a marvelous new interface and graphics which look like they came from a graphic novel, and *Heart of China*, a romantic adventure game.

Under the letter of intent, Dynamix will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sierra. The Dynamix label may stay on all the new products, but the decision is yet to be made by Sierra. Asked why the deal was necessary, Dynamix President Jeff Tunnell stated, "Sierra is doing so much so right and we can be helped so much by their distribution, marketing and support."

Cinemaware Buys, Sells and Restructures

March was an eventful month for **Cinemaware Corporation**, publishers of *Rocket Ranger, It Came from the Desert* and *TV Sports: Basketball*. On March 14, 1990, the company announced that **NEC Technologies**, principally known in the entertainment market for its *TurboGrafx* videogame system, had purchased a minority interest in **Cinemaware** and acquired a seat on the board of directors of the software publisher. Bob Jacob, Executive Vice-President of New Business Development for Cinemaware indicated in an interview with *CGW* that the minority interest was less than 20% of the total share holdings.

In addition to the NEC interest, Cinemaware purchased the entire inventory of **Masterplay**'s *Star Saga* series and plans to market the titles at a $49.00 price point through **Electronic Arts Distribution**. This should provide better visibility for the products according to Jacob. He also indicated that the company will be acquiring other disk-based products from outside the company in order to continue to have a presence in that market while Cinemaware focuses its efforts on multi-media based products. Finally, the company restructured its corporate officers with Phyllis Jacob being recognized as President and CEO and David Riordan promoted to Vice-President of Product Development.

Electronic Arts Inks Pact With Nintendo

On April 5, 1990, **Electronic Arts** and **Nintendo of America, Inc.** announced that they had signed an agreement in which **Electronic Arts** became a Nintendo licensee. To date, EA has licensed 13 of their disk-based action titles to other Nintendo licensees as cartridge-based videogame products. The latest title to be so licensed was *Ski or Die*, which was licensed to **Konami**. Now, EA will not only produce an original title for the NES, *Skate or Die 2*, but are expected to publish versions of *Budokan*, their highly acclaimed martial arts game, and *Low Blow*, their recent boxing game, on the videogame system. Don Traeger's group, the in-house production team which has specialized in EA's action and arcade games to date, will have production of cartridge-based products as a primary emphasis. Noting that joystick-oriented products that used to do well on the C-64 are performing considerably better on the NES, EA Vice-President Bing Gordon observed that the transition from disk-based action games to cartridge-based action games was inevitable.

Asked if the company's commitment to Nintendo and unconfirmed future **Sega** commitments would force a cutback in the production of disk-based software, Gordon noted that the plan (to be presented to EA's board of directors) calls for, at least, sixteen new MS-DOS products (equal to the last fiscal year) and eleven new Amiga products (two more than the previous fiscal year). The MS-DOS products will focus more on story-telling and less on action games and the new Amiga products will feature more strategy/simulation games during the same period.

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Scorpion's View

Continued from page 42

The point is to make the companies see that they can't get away with sending out severely flawed games anymore, that they *must* take the time to test their products properly, or they're going to lose business. You're the business; make yourselves heard!

Bad News Dept: The prospects for an 8-bit Apple version of *Ultima VI* are very iffy. **Origin Systems** is dubious about doing one, although there is an outside chance they might change their minds. Here is Origin's official current position, from Greg Malone, Marketing and Communications Manager for Origin:

In response to the many inquiries being made by Apple users regarding whether or not Ultima VI:The False Prophet *is going to be made available on the Apple platform, I'd like to fill you in on Origin's current view.*

Unlike all previous Ultima's, number 6 is the first one which was completely designed and implemented on the IBM PC (& compatibles) first. When Richard "Lord British" Garriott learned that he could make use of the hugely growing IBM compatible market which has machines featuring 640K RAM, a hard drive, and 256-color graphics, he couldn't resist the opportunity to as he put it, " . . . create the ultimate Ultima!" Couple that with the ever disturbing fact that the Apple market is continuing to disintegrate at an alarming rate (beginning with base support from Apple Computer, Inc., and trickling down to the Apple-specific magazines and even to disaffected Apple users), it is little wonder that the question about developing Ultima on the Apple has arisen. As of this date, a technical evaluation of such an endeavour is being conducted by ORIGIN. When one considers the daunting task of converting a 640K game to 128K and doing so in a timely and cost-efficient manner, the air of pessimism is unavoidable. Also, it is a widely recognized trend among entertainment software publishers today to focus title development on the remaining strong markets, namely IBM & compatibles, Amiga (especially for Europe) and the Commodore 64. (This mix is certain to evolve and change as time passes!)

However, the subject regarding an Apple Ultima VI will not be entirely decided until all of the facts are in, including whatever comment or enthusiasm YOU (the Apple users) can muster. If you wish to express your support for an Apple version of Ultima VI, you should send (by U.S. Mail) a letter to the address below. Also, while sending us your comments, send a copy of your letter to your local software retailer and to your favorite Apple magazine publisher. If you don't, you could end up fighting a lost cause.

Send comments to:

Apple ULTIMA Comments
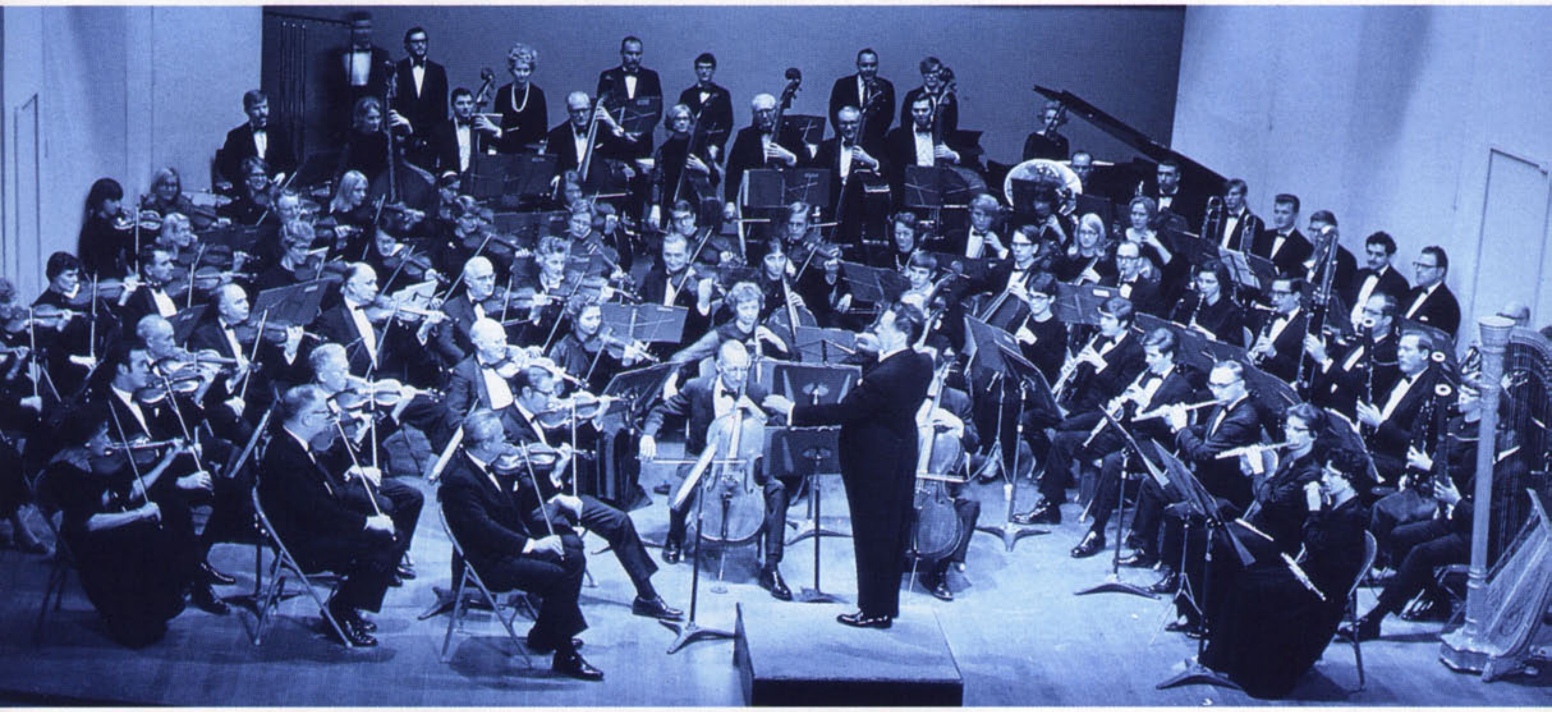
ORIGIN

P.O. Box 161750

Austin, TX 78716

So, there you have it, folks. If you're an Apple owner, now is the time to send those cards and letters, so *Ultima VI* won't pass you by. Good luck! **CGW**

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System Requirements: IBM-PC/XT/AT or compatible, minimum 256k RAM

Circle Reader Service #82

Taking a Peek

Continued from page 6

time in order to avoid the dreaded "cornfield collision" is as important as the revenues your trains generate. Abstracted quite a bit, this rail road strategy game is still fairly challenging. One wishes the game could be extended beyond a year and that other railroads were involved in the competition. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Blue Valley Software
29 Shepard Street
Walton, NY 13856

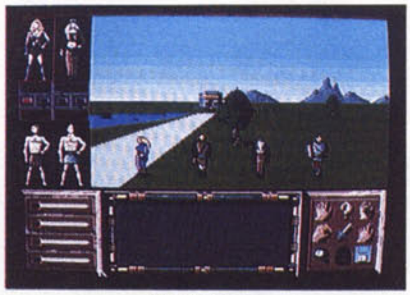
MERLIN and THE MAGIC MIRROR: These two programs are both text-only, self help packages. Merlin takes place in a fantasy underworld where you will deal with darkness and light. This bit of fantasy and mysticism cuts you through dealing with fear, love, past mistakes, etc. The Magic Mirror is more clinical in its approach, offering you a self help toolbox of life changing techniques. One can explore emotions, roles in relationships, belief systems and more. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Data East
1850 Little Orchard Street
San Jose, CA 95125

DRAKKHEN: This is the first of a proposed series of Fantasy Role-Playing games from Data East. Originally published in Europe by Infogrames, the object is to grab the eight dragon jewels from their respective princes. If you manage to succeed in gathering these together, you will be able to put the old dragon back on the throne and save the land of Drakkhen. Drakkhen uses real time interaction, 3-D graphics, and the likes of 200 magic spells. Amiga ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Electronic Arts
PO Box 7578
San Mateo, CA 94403

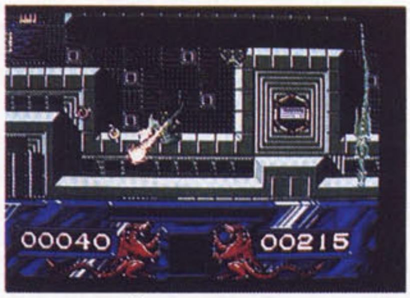
THE HOUND OF SHADOW: Set in the Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft, this text/graphic adventure uses the "Timeline" role-playing system to create a shadowy world of spiritualism and magic in post-WWI England. Using an extensive character creation system, players generate unique personas with attributes and skills will affect the course of each adventure. The game system, which melds role-playing and adventure gaming elements shows promise and the setting is colorful and refreshingly different, but the game is plagued by an awkward text interface and parser. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #9.



Drakkhen



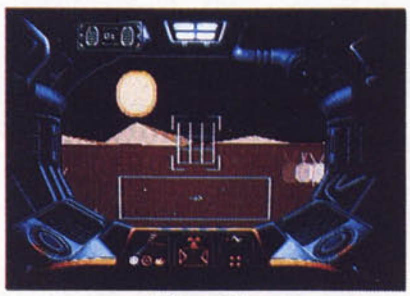
The Hound of Shadow



Dragonscape



Trivial Pursuit



Infestation



Codename Iceman

Free Spirit Software
P.O. Box 128
Kutztown, PA 19530

DRAGONSCAPE: One thing you notice right away about this little shoot 'em up arcade game, is that it's pretty. The graphics are well done (which is rare in this medium—get it? Rare, medium and well done!). Ahem, yes. The screen scrolls smoothly while you fly your dumb, but trusty, dragon Garvan around Techno City and WasteLand in a quest to match puzzle pieces (battery with flashlight, etc.) while zapping the nasties constantly buzzing around you. The tunes are worth keeping the volume left on, too, which is a rarity for an arcade game. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Parker Brothers
50 Dunham Road
Beverly, MA 01915

TRIVIAL PURSUIT: If you haven't already burned out from playing the board game, you will probably enjoy the computer version of this classic from the eighties. The computer version of "Trivial Pursuit" does give you many, many categories of questions to base your game play on, but even though the computer opponents have distinct personalities (areas of specialized knowledge), they just don't get excited enough to rail and cajole like people do. IBM with two disks ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Psygnosis Ltd.
S. Harrington Buildings
Sefton St. Liverpool L3 4BQ

INFESTATION: Psygnosis joins the 3-D poly-filled graphics club with this interesting entry. Set in a planetary colony over-

Continued on page 56

Actual IBM EGA Graphics Screens



Dirk the Daring in his quest to rescue the lovely Princess Daphne.



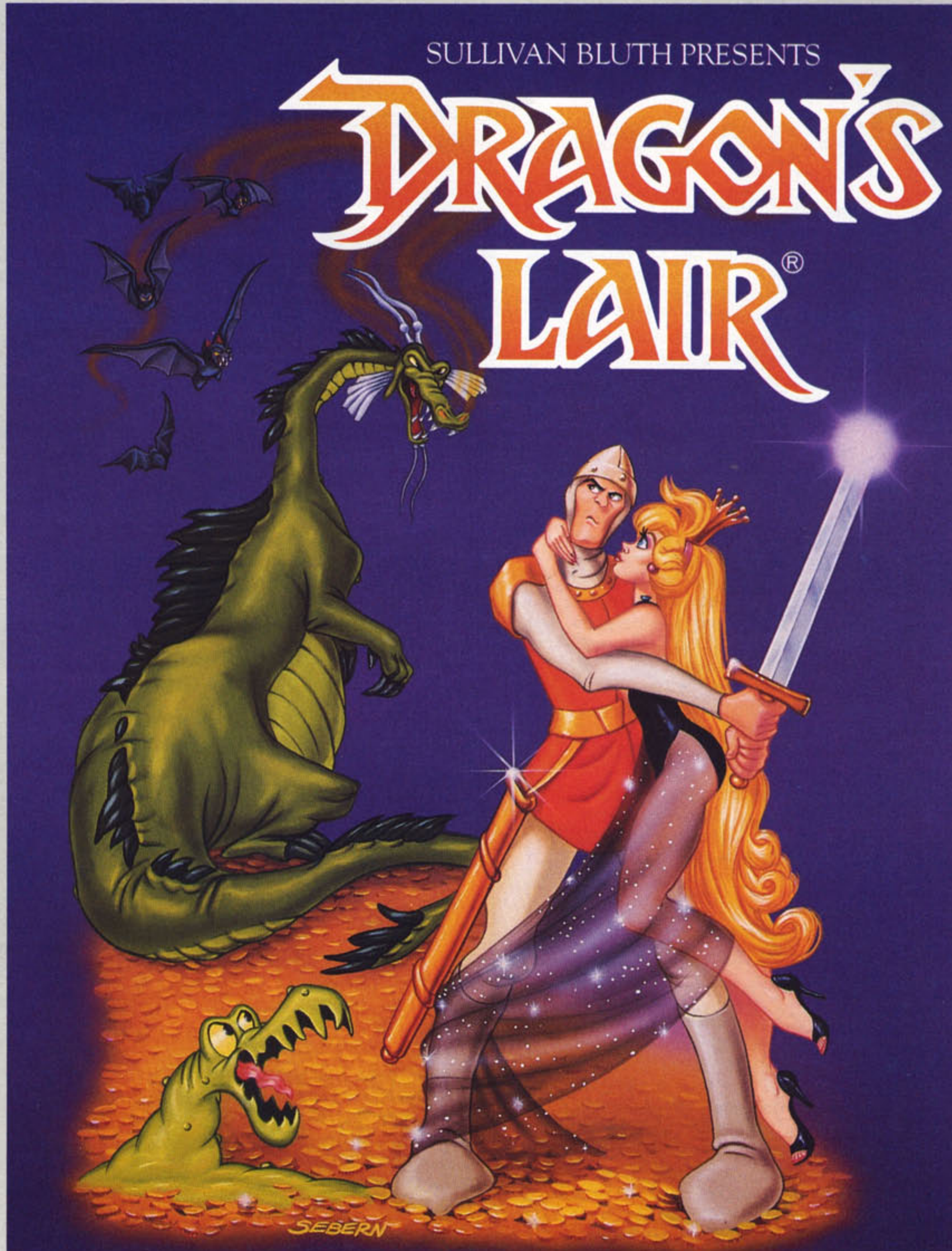
Journey through the cavernous castle of Mordroc, the evil wizard.



Singe, the fire-breathing dragon, and Mordroc's personal pet.



Overcome a series of nefarious traps and magic spells in the battle with Mordroc.



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Never before have PC adventure players been able to experience animation like this. And never before has Dirk the Daring had you to guide him through the ultimate animated interactive adventure.

Dragon's Lair is available for your IBM or compatible at fine retailers everywhere, or to order directly, just call 1-800-238-4277. But hurry, the line is already forming.

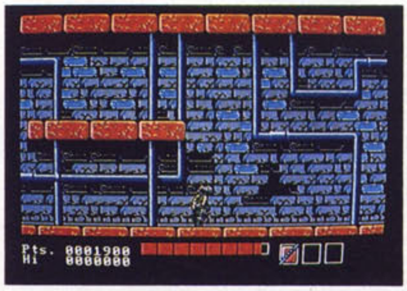
SULLIVAN BLUTH
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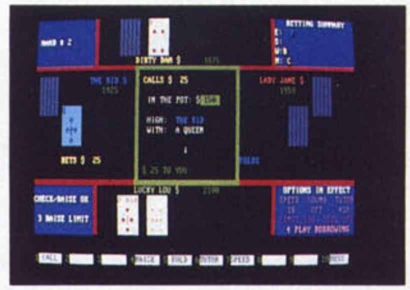
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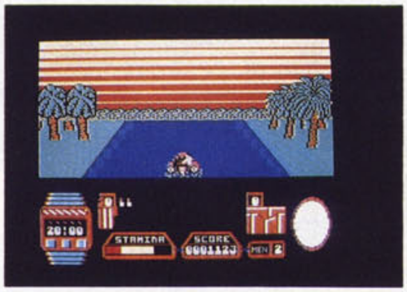
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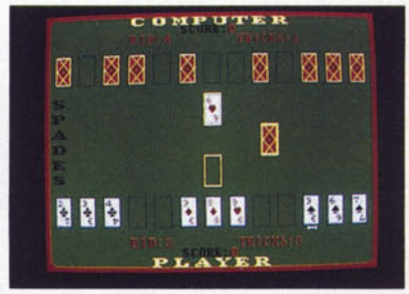
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



Amarillo Slim's Real Poker



Butcher Hill



House of Cards



Dragon's Lair: Escape from Singe's Castle

run by aliens al la "Aliens" (and a hundred others), the player maneuvers himself freely in a 3-D first person environment (a la Mindscape's "The Colony"). The goal is to uncover the mysteries of the human outpost's demise. The Psygnosis graphics are top-quality, but the interface is not a simple one and the documentation is typically sparse. Amiga (no price). Circle Reader Service #12.

Sierra On-Line, Inc.
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614

CODENAME: ICEMAN: Recognized as a leader in computer adventure games, Sierra On-Line has just unleashed Jim Wall's latest: a cold war technothriller game. "Codename: Iceman" is a combination adventure game AND action game, complete with a stealth submarine simulator. Best of all, the "Iceman" delivers one particularly "cool" feature: a mouse interface so that one may "point and click" rather than "look this" and "look that". Typical of recent Sierra releases, "Iceman" utilizes nine 5.25" disks or four 3.5" disks, supports several 16 color graphic and many sound cards. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Ultra Games
(a division of Konami)
900 Deerfield Parkway
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: Those slice 'em, dice 'em heroes on the half shell are all here for plenty of arcade action. Out in force to rescue their lovely heroine (April O'Neil) from the clutches of the evil Shredder, the green guys have to kick 'em below the shell through six New York territories, each full of bad guys. With a slice of pizza in one hand and the joystick in the other, it's off to the sewers to clean up the city of New York (and you thought Hercules cleaning the stables was tough!). Amiga ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Villa Crespo Software
P.O. Box 1818
Highland Park, IL 60035

AMARILLO SLIM'S REAL POKER 5 CARD STUD: Okay, here's the deal . . . Amarillo Slim is the voice in your ear, counseling you when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em. Of course, if you don't follow Slim's advice, you'll find out Slim's idea of when to scold 'em, too. You play against three computer opponents, each with a personality which can be psyched out, just like a human opponent. The computer keeps your stats, gives you a rating (depending how much your style coincides with Slim's) and even gives you expressed, written suggestions as to how to improve your play. A good buy-in for poker players. IBM ($49.95).Circle Reader Service #15.

Virgin Mastertronic
18001 Cowan
Irvine, CA 92714

BUTCHER HILL: For all you quarter pumpers out there, here is another joystick jockey's delight. Butcher Hill presents you three challenges to complete your mission, each with a different style of arcade play. Plenty of shoot 'em up and quick reflexes are required as you speed down the river, grunt through the jungle and devastate a village. C-64/128 ($9.99). Circle Reader Service #16.

HOUSE OF CARDS: This could be the deal of the day if you like a few of the six card games in this package. Two handed bridge, hearts, cribbage, spades, pinochle or gin rummy are the challenge, each with a variety of game options to keep it lively. The graphics are what one would expect, the computer play is crisp and intelligent, and the value is really there. IBM ($14.99). Circle Reader Service #17.

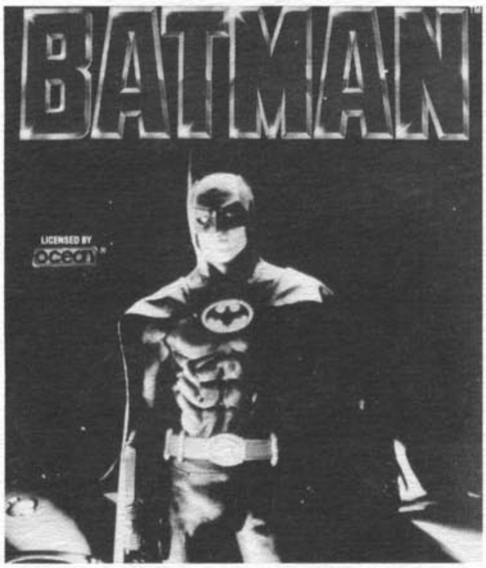
Visionary, Ltd.
15235 Shady Grove Road Suite 100
Rockville, MD

DRAGON'S LAIR: ESCAPE FROM SINGE'S CASTLE: Dirk the Daring, that suave arcade adventurer of yesteryear, lives on in part two of the personal computer version of the original laser disk hit "Dragon's Lair". This version contains several more graphically stunning rooms from the original arcade game. Remember the mudmen room and the crumbling pathway? The smithy and the flying horse? The rooms are abbreviated somewhat but are faithful to the original in sound and graphic detail. Amiga ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Wait 'Til They Get A Load Of This!

Data East's "Batman: The Movie" Game

by David M. Wilson



TITLE:	Batman
SYSTEMS:	Atari, Amiga, C64/128
REVIEWED ON:	Amiga and C-64/128
PRICE:	Amiga ($44.95), Atari ST ($39.95), and C64/128 ($29.95)
DESIGNER:	Ocean Software
PUBLISHER:	Data East San Jose, CA

The odds are always against the Caped Crusader. Many dedicated Batmaniacs prophesied that the Batman movie would be a financial disaster due to the choice of Michael ("Mr. Mom") Keaton to play the Dark Knight. The odds were against him, yet the movie went on to become a box office bonanza. Bathysteria and Bat-capitalism proved that just about anything with the Bat-logo on it could, and would, sell.

Data East has jumped on the Batman bandwagon (Batwagon?) with their second Batgame, *Batman* (their first being *Batman, The Caped Crusader*). *Batman* is based entirely on the cinematic triumph of last summer.

Scene one places the player at the Axis Chemical plant. The player must find his way through this maze in order to stop Jack Napier from cleaning out records of criminal activity. This time, Batman has the ability to swing on a Batrope (a detail neglected in the earlier *Batman* game). Players must take care when swinging on the Batrope because of the many obstacles (like brick walls) inside the chemical plant.

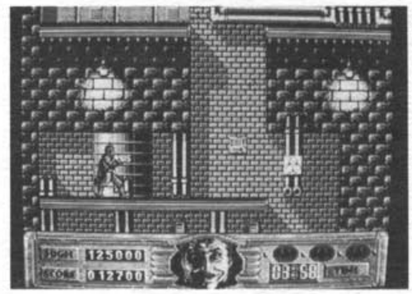
The Joker's henchmen can usually be felled by a thrown Batarang, but Batman can also take the bad guys out of commission by swinging into them or dropping on top of them. Batman must not only avoid their bullets, but also the dripping toxic waste caused from bullets striking pipes, etc.

Getting through the maze in scene one is difficult at first. Players should remember that the ultimate goal can always be found by working to the right of the screen. Then, when one gets to the end of this maze, there is Jack Napier himself. Nail him with the Batarang. He'll topple down into a vat of toxic chemicals and then, "Holy toxic waste, Batman, you've created the Joker!"

Scene two is a race through the streets of Gotham City in the Batmobile. Players must avoid collisions with other cars while following the prompts to the Batcave. The challenge is in using the Batrope to make some of the hairpin turns involved in Gotham's dense traffic pattern. There will often be cars between the Batmobile and the corner, but players can go ahead and shoot the Batrope, anyway. The other cars will back off if the Batmobile slows slightly when the Batrope is fired off. Remember, speed is of the essence in getting to the Batcave.

Speaking of essence, scene three requires the player to use some rudimentary skill in logic. First, the screen displays a sampling of objects. Then, using the highly developed and sophisticated Bat-computer (actually, the player's own brain), players must find the three products which contain the various elements of the compound called *Smilex*. The program will tell the player how many out of the three chosen items are correct (as in the game *Mastermind*). So, the player continues selecting items until he runs out of time or until he has chosen the three correct items.

In scene four, the Gotham City Carnival is certain to be a disaster if the player fails to pilot the Batwing aircraft properly. In this sequence, would-be Batpilots try to catch the balloons which contain poisonous gas and cut their towlines. It is very difficult to judge the correct angle to hit the lines and will cause some consternation to even the most coordinated joystick veteran. To make matters worse, the Batwing sustains damage whenever it catches the balloons at the wrong angle. Piloting is much easier in the Amiga version, because it offers a more realistic viewpoint in terms of the Batwing.



The final setting is Gotham Cathedral. Another maze awaits players here as our hero climbs the stairs to do battle with the Joker. Collapsing staircases and machine-gunning henchmen are the obstacles one finds here. This is all in a day's work for Batman, however.

Batman, the game, catches most of the flavor of the Batman movie. However, the C-64 version is very disappointing because machine lock-ups continually occur. For instance, hitting the joystick button at the wrong time causes the program to freeze up. Indeed, there are quite a few other computer gremlins lurking in the C-64 version, including villains that just float on-screen for a moment and then mysteriously disappear.

The Amiga version is more lovingly crafted, making the Batwing and Batmobile scenes in the C-64 version seem thrown together. The Amiga version has a view from above and behind the Batmobile, while the C-64 has a view in which the player looks down from a distance. Some would blame the limitations of the machine, but not this author (having previously seen C-64 based games, such as *TechnoCop* from Epyx, that used the same point of view as the Amiga version of *Batman* does).

If one has an Amiga and loves action games, this can be a very enjoyable game. Due to the frequent lock-ups and freezes on the C-64, however, that version cannot be recommended (even to Commodore owners). Data East has come much closer to producing the look and feel of the Batman genre with *Batman* than they did with *Batman: The Caped Crusader*. Now, we can await the game and movie sequels, with their new storylines and villains. **CGW**

Over There

Continued from page 10

the player must control his son in an effort to track down the "murderer". The one major feature that stands out from this "good vs. evil" adventure is the interface. It is totally adaptable and can be customized to suit your needs. You can have text input or a complicated menu to select commands from. The menu can be of any size. The screen can not only be 40, 60 or 80 column, but you can include the text within windows or as two columns. The text, background, status line (which can be turned off) can be of one of a variety of colors. The usual undo, ramsave/load, etc. features are included as well as an advanced parser. Further interesting commands include a "think about" command and a randomizing feature (throw a book and one will be randomly thrown from the batch carried). The parser is intelligent, so if one wishes to open a door, and already has a key, the parser will automatically open it. If there are a variety of doors, the player will be presented with a list from which to select a choice. The list of features goes on and on!

UK software house, **Palace** *can now offer you the chance to control your own stable of Dragons in their latest tale of arcana called Dragon's Breath.* Legend has it that the secret of eternal life lies in the throne room of Dwarf Mountain palace. Before one can reach that, however, he must collect the three pieces of a talisman. The player will start the game with one Dragon, so a bit of breeding won't go amiss here. Wealth must be generated, which can be achieved via conquering villages (this includes an arcade-type sequence as the player controls his dragon's attack on the village). The game also includes a complicated magic system which can be used to increase wealth and your dragon's powers. *Dragon's Breath*, for up to three players, is available now on Amiga and ST (£29.99).

Then there's the game produced by...oh, crumbs, I've run out of space. I dunno, I just get into the swing of things and it's time to bid farewell. See you next month, mind how you go. **CGW**

NOTE: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

COMPUTER ADVENTURE WORLD, 318 KENSINGTON, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND, L7 0EY. TEL: 01144-51-263-6306

SDC, 60 BOSTON ROAD, LONDON, ENGLAND, W7 3TR. TEL: 01144-1-567-7621

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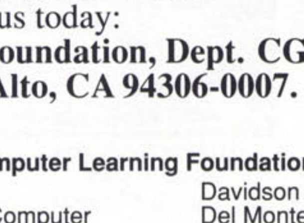
All of the above telephone numbers assume direct dial. If you find that problems occur, call your international operator for assistance.



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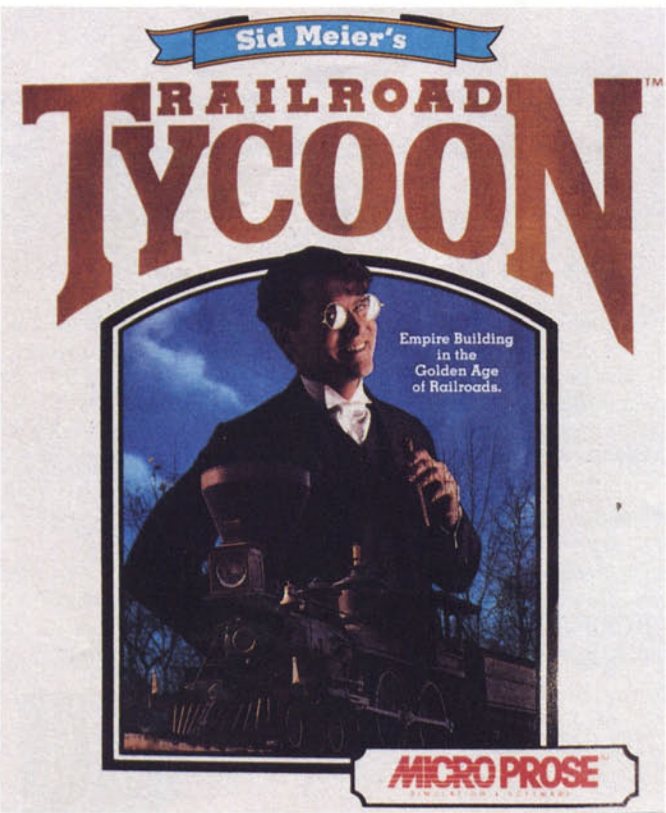
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Workin' On The Ol' Railroad

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon Is Right On Schedule

by Russell Sipe

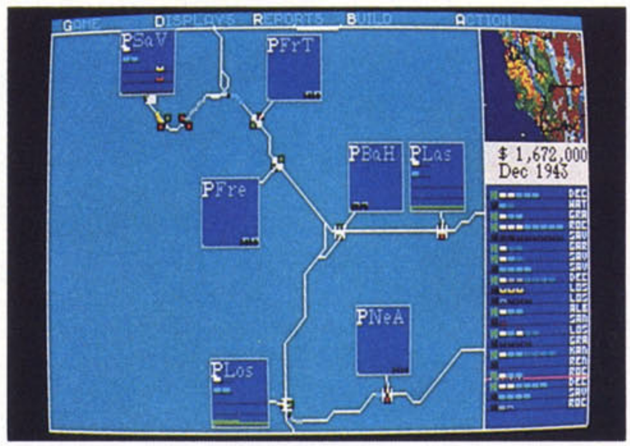


I love trains. And that is why I have been so disappointed until now. As a railfan and a model railroader I have had a computer railroad game in my mind for several years. For a variety of reasons, it has never been developed. To be sure, other computer railroad games *have* been produced. But these did/do not have the depth (e.g. Abracadata's *Design Your Own Train*) or breadth (e.g. SSI's *Rails West* and Artdink's *Railroad Empire*) to excite me.

But now there is Sid Meier's newest game, *Railroad Tycoon*. To put it succinctly, this is Sid's best design yet. And that's saying a lot, when you consider that his last two designs were the award winning *F-19 Stealth Fighter* and *Pirates*.



1. Regional view of Western U.S. showing the Golden Empire Western RR and its competitors. The GEW runs from Chicago to L.A. and S.F.



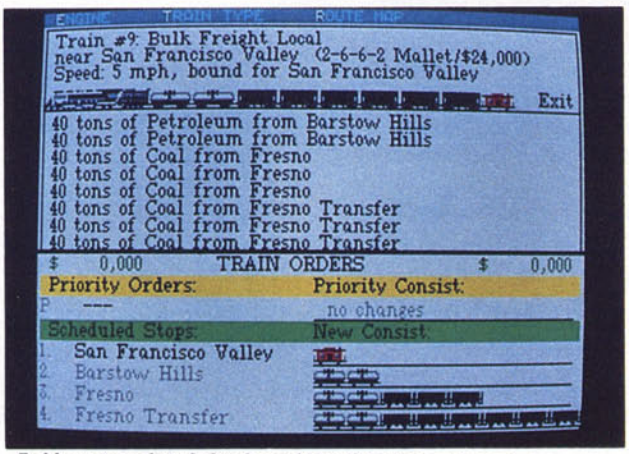
2. Zooming down from the Regional Display we see an Area Display covering the San Francisco, Los Angeles, Las Vegas operations area.



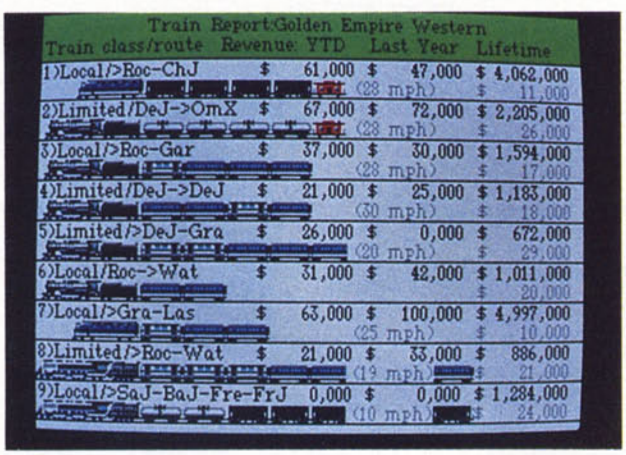
3. Next we zoom down to the Local Display and see our operations in central California, from Fresno (Fre) in the South to San Francisco (SaV) in the North



4. The final map zooms down to the Detail Display. Three trains are visible, an LA bound freight (yellow), a SF bound coal drag (black), and a SF bound passenger train (blue)



5. Here is a detail display of the S.F. bound coal drag pictured in the Detail Display



6. The Train Report provides you with an overview of your trains and their performance. The S.F. bound coal drag is train #9

designs were the award winning *F-19 Stealth Fighter* and *Pirates*.

Overview

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon (*Tycoon*) recreates railroading in the U.S., Britain, and Europe from the early days (1828) to the present. In doing so, Sid has brought together three great railroad themes: corporate financing, track laying, and operations/dispatching. In *Tycoon*, all three themes are treated in depth. The beauty of the design is that you can set your level of involvement for each of the themes. For example, you can specify "friendly" or "cutthroat" competition to determine the intensity of conflict with other railroads in the game. The operations mode can be set to dispatcher mode wherein you are forced to pay more attention to train movements and the location of signals, or you can chose to let the computer control operations. Finally, the economy can be set to "complex" or "simple". This affects the difficulty level of matching the correct cargos to particular destinations.

The Background

The spiritual predecessors to *Tycoon* are *1830* (a board game from Avalon Hill) and *SimCity* (the award winning computer game from Maxis Software). SimCity you say? That's right! The elegant construction sequence and underlying "engine" that runs the world in SimCity was the inspiration for the construction interface and "world" of *Tycoon*. Like SimCity, the player gets immersed in the building of his world/railroad empire. *Tycoon* is, at least, as addictive as SimCity, perhaps even more.

The Particulars

Tycoon is a one player game in which you compete against up to three computer controlled opponents to build a profitable railroad empire. There are three theaters or scenarios: England (with an 1828 starting date); Eastern U.S. (1830); Western U.S. (1866) and Western Europe (1900). Each scenario has certain peculiarities. Cargos and therefore strategies differ. For example the Western U.S. scenario poises you at the historical moment when the transcontinental railroad was begun. By giving you a one time cash bonus when you complete your transcontinental line and by doubling the revenue for some cargos delivered East-West and halving the revenue of some cargos delivered North-South you are "forced" into building your own transcontinental road. Note: once your transcontinental line is completed and your bonus collected, the doubling/halving of revenues is eliminated.

The actual location of resources, industries, and population distribution change each game (thus each game is unique). Cities are always in the same location, but their sizes vary. For example, New York may start as the largest settlement in the area in one game, but merely a minor settlement in another.

Course of Play

The game is played in real time with a user selectable time scale. At "moderate" rate, one month passes each 10 seconds (plus time outs that occur when certain screens

are accessed). Although the time scale is unrealistic in one respect (trains take several months to reach their destination), this anomaly does not affect the perceived realism of the simulation. A typical 10 minutes with the game might go something like this:

It's August 1850 and your Golden Empire Eastern Railroad has $615,000 in operating funds. Your road dominates Western Maryland. As the month opens two passenger trains arrive (one in Harper's Ferry and one in Johnstown) bringing $146,000 in revenue. Using Regional Display, you notice a large population area to the southwest. You go to an Detail Display of the area and learn that the city is Bluefield, West Virginia. It was the terminus of a now defunct railroad company (thus it's large size). Here is a city ripe for picking.

You check the economic climate: "normal". Buying right-of-way and laying track is a bit more expensive than you would like right at the moment. You decide to wait, hoping for a downturn in the economy which will cause land and labor to be cheaper. In the meantime your established trains follow their appointed schedules producing revenue.

Your patience pays off. In January 1951 the economy slips into a recession. Now, you can afford to build. But, just to be safe you decide to call your broker and check on the activities of the other railroads (you'd hate to be in a big building project if one of your opponents decided to made a run on your stock).

Your broker informs you that, at $43 per share, your stock is currently the most valuable RR stock on the board. Although Jay Gould has a million dollars in operating funds in his Bangor & Portland RR, it is doubtful that he would make a run at you. Your broker also reveals that Cornelius Vanderbilt's Akron and Cleveland RR is hurting financially. The stock is going for $8. However, with 50% of A&C's stock in the A&C treasury, Vanderbilt is safe for the moment. You make a mental note to monitor this situation.

Now it's time to build your line to Bluefield. The Southwest terminus of your line is currently at Winchester (in the midst of vast coal fields). From Winchester you strike out to the southwest heading down the Shenendoah Valley. You turn west to build through a gap in the Appalachian Mountains and lay track into Bluefield. Because there are steel and paper mills three squares from your railhead you decide to build a Terminal in Bluefield (pretty expensive, but the Terminal's 3 square radius allows you to pick up loads from the mills). With the completion of the Winchester-Bluefield line you go to your engine facility in Harper's Ferry and "build" a new train. You buy a 4-4-0 American steam engine and add some passenger cars. Now you establish a regular run for this train between Harper's Ferry and Bluefield (via Winchester). Finally you add a couple of signal towers along the route to expedite your train movements.

In the mean time you have received a series of messages informing you that Gould has been selling stock in the B&P (thereby amassing a war chest in excess of $1,500,000) while Vanderbilt has been selling stock in the A&C. It may be time to think about an acquisition... or perhaps you should be preparing to avoid a hostile takeover attempt. It's a dog eat dog world out there. What will you do?

Other Points of Interest

The documentation is typical for Microprose, over 200 pages cover the rules, historical background, and some strategies. Note that the EMD GP Diesel portrayed on the title screen and in the documentation is not available in the game. Sid says he hopes to implement the EMD GP with later scenario disks. Yes, that's right, Sid hopes to develop a series of support disks for this product (no details yet).

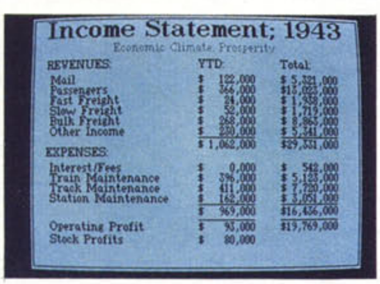
This game is detailed and realistic enough that it could serve as a teaching tool in history, economics, and management classes. Teachers take note.

The sound routines on the Roland and AdLib are excellent. Great steam engine sounds accompany your engines as they come out of the shop. Nice functional sounds during play serve as audio cues to events in the game. Even the IBM sound is functional, although obviously a far cry from the AdLib and Roland.

Summary

I love trains . . . and that is why I am so excited. This is a great game. This is the game I wanted to design, and more. Since I didn't design it, I'm glad Sid did. All Aboard!

CGW







Letters From Paradise



Beckett Betrayed

I was disappointed to learn that M. Evan Brooks' review of our product, *Battle of Austerlitz* (*CGW* #70), was inaccurate and incomplete. This reviewer claims to spend the most time on the games he reviews versus other reviewers (a claim he made to me during a phone conversation). However, after noticing the glaring inaccuracies and obvious omissions, I can only conclude that he did not spend an adequate amount of time with our product.

For example, in the title box, *Austerlitz* is described as a one player game, while in reality the game can have one or two players, along with the option of having the computer play itself. How could this have been missed!

Also, the reviewer recommends the use of the military symbology over the icons "since it yields more information as to a unit's status." This statement is false. Unlike any other wargame we are aware of, the icons in *Austerlitz* animate, revealing exactly what each unit is doing, such as melee, marching or firing. Nothing is more exciting in *Austerlitz* as seeing an entire line of infantry raise their muskets to their shoulders and proceed to rout enemy attacking formations through blistering fire, all of which unfolds continuously.

The most outstanding feature of *Austerlitz* is the way leaders are handled, though the review only casually mentions their existence. In the game, each army the computer controls can have one of six different overall army leaders put in charge. The computer will then assume the persona and fight the battle using his characteristics: aggressive, cautious, etc. Each leader is modeled accurately and has a noticeable effect on the game, though in our phone conversation with the reviewer, he implied that he had only played the game with the historical leaders in charge.

However, it does not end here. Each corps in the game is also rated based on the historical commander of the corps. When a player utilizes a corps order, which can be move, attack or defend a certain location, the corps will attempt to carry out the order very intelligently based on the capabilities of the commander. One who has played the game will notice how slow and cautious some of the Allied columns are compared to the fiery Bagration's. These corps commander levels, along with each army's morale, can be adjusted at the beginning of play for balance. Of course, if the player desires complete control of a corps, he has it by not issuing a corps orders. Thus, both styles of play are present. All of this was omitted in the review.

Major features of the game also escaped the reviewer. Hidden movement is available, which takes range, weather and battle effects into acount for determining visibility. One can choose to have the computer use the historical strategy, or randomly choose among many alternate strategies. A combat watch window can be turned on or off, providing a text and graphic result for each combat in a pop-up window for those desirous of knowing the numbers in our calculations.

Finally, I must take issue with the reviewer's historical remarks. His assertion that it would be necessary for the French to attack the entrenched allied positions had the allies suddenly gone to the defensive shows only an elementary understanding of the campaign. He claims that had the French not attacked on December 2nd, it would have been a strategic defeat for Napoleon. This does not take into account anything which could have happened subsequently. I must confess that I am not among those that believe the French army was going to mysteriously vanish on December 3rd.

In conclusion, *Austerlitz* is many orders of magnitude better than our Borodino game, which won the Charles S. Roberts award for best pre-20th Century Computer Wargame. Maybe the reviewer would have been pleased with *Austerlitz* had he utilized all that it offered. I hope in the future, when *CGW* prints an unfavorable review, they will contact the publishing company so as to prevent inaccurate reviewslike this one getting published without an immediate response.

Stephen M. Beckett II
Project Leader, *Austerlitz*
Cornerstone Software, Inc.

Other than that, how did you like the review, Steve? Seriously, the Basic Information Box error cannot be blamed on the author. We try to reference that information against in-house products as a fact-checking device. In our hurry to cover Napoleon at Austerlitz, *we did not have a production copy of the game in-house to doublecheck the information against. "Mea culpa," said editor Johnny as he realized his mistake. Many of the assumed oversights which you mention are not mistakes, but a difference in philosophy. Hidden movement, weather, etc. were not mentioned because most wargames have those features. Further, we could turn every page of* CGW *over to discussing the "What if"s of the campaign without settling it. We appreciate your explanations of those areas which remained unclear after the review, but want to remind you that it is not our policy to allow software companies to respond to a review until it has been published. If an error occurs, it is better to err independently than to err on the basis of publisher/designer influence.*

Point of Purchase

I purchase games, in part, based on the company and the designer. I would like to see the name of the designer on the packaging. Also, certain companies, such as **Koei** and **SSG** would find their sales would increase if their products were easier to find in normal retail outlets.

Steve Burgess
Stanton, CA

Both companies face some resistance in the retail market. Wargames do not seem to be moving fast enough to suit some retailers and their primary distributors, so some quality games have trouble reaching the retail market. If there is sufficient customer demand, however, the stores will stock them. Talk to your local store. That's where the action is.

On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 4, please rate the following games (if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A= Excellent

B= Above Average

C= Average

D= Below Average

F= Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

1 = Under 14 years old
2 = 14-17 years old
3 = 18-20 years old
4 = 21-30 years old
5 = 31-35 years old
6 = 36-40 years old
7 = 41-50 years old
8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

Games

4. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
5. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
6. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
7. Sim City (Maxis)
8. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
9. Populous (Electronic Arts)
10. Starflight 2 (Electronic Arts)
11. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
12. Battlehawks 1942 (Lucasfilm)
13. Lords of Rising Sun (Cinemaware)
14. Loom (Lucasfilm)
15. Drakkhen (Data East)
16. The Fool's Errand (Miles)
17. Hero's Quest (Sierra)
18. Codename: Iceman (Sierra)
19. Waterloo (SSI)
20. Second Front (SSI)
21. Gold of the Americas (SSG)
22. 688 Attack Sub (EA)
23. Day of the Viper (Accolade)
24. Ski or Die! (EA)
25. Low Blow (EA)
26. Heat Wave (Accolade)
27. Loom (Lucasfilm)
28. Omega (Origin)
29. Sword of the Samurai (Microprose)
30. Star Trek: Transinium Challenge (Simon & Schuster)
31. Napoleon at Austerlitz (Tevex)
32. Bandit Kings of Ancient China (Koei)
33. Search for the Titanic (Intracorp)
34. Gunboat (Accolade)
35. Infestation (Psygnosis)
36. Colonel's Bequest (Sierra)
37. Malta Storm (Simulations Canada)
38. Dragon's Lair (Merit Software)
39. Dragon Wars (Interplay)
40. LHX Attack Chopper (EA)

Articles

41. Railroad Tycoon Sneak
42. Stat-Based Games Survey
43. Over There
44. Star Trek Hints
45. Scorpion's View
46. M-1 Tank Platoon Strategy
47. Batman Review
48. Indianapolis 500 Review
49. DragonStrike Sneak Preview
50. Cryllan Alliance Review

Questions

51. Do you have any of the following game machines? (list all numbers that apply.)

1=Nintendo Game System
2=Sega Genesis
3=NEC TurboGraphics

Conversions Received



Altered Beast (Sega) Am,St
Blue Angels (Accolade) Am
Budokan (EA) Am
Clue Master Detective (Mastertronic) Am
Dark Castle (Three-Sixty) IIGS
Double Dragon II (Mastertronic) Am
Dragon Wars (Interplay) IBM
Earl Weaver Baseball 1989 Player Stats (EA) IBM
Ferrari Formula One (EA) C64
Gold Rush (Sierra) Ap
House of Cards (Mastertronic) IBM
Jack Nicklaus Course Disk Vol II (Accolade) Am,C64
Kristal, The (Cinemaware) IBM
Out Run (Sega) C64
Pro Tennis Tour (UBI Soft) C64
Risk (Mastertronic) Am, ST
Starflight (EA) C64
Test Drive II European Challenge Scenery (Accolade) IIGS,Mac
Test Drive II Muscle Cars (Accolade) C64
Third Courier, The (Accolade) IIGS
Time To Die (Mastertronic) Ap
TV Sports Football (Cinemaware) C64
WC Leader Board Famous Courses Vol I,II,III (Access) IBM
Welltris (Spectrum Holobyte) Mac
Where in Europe is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund) Am
Xenon (Mastertronic) IBM

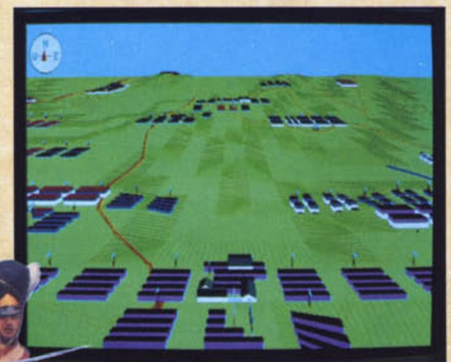
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